

The  
American  
Rhythm

Mary  
Austin



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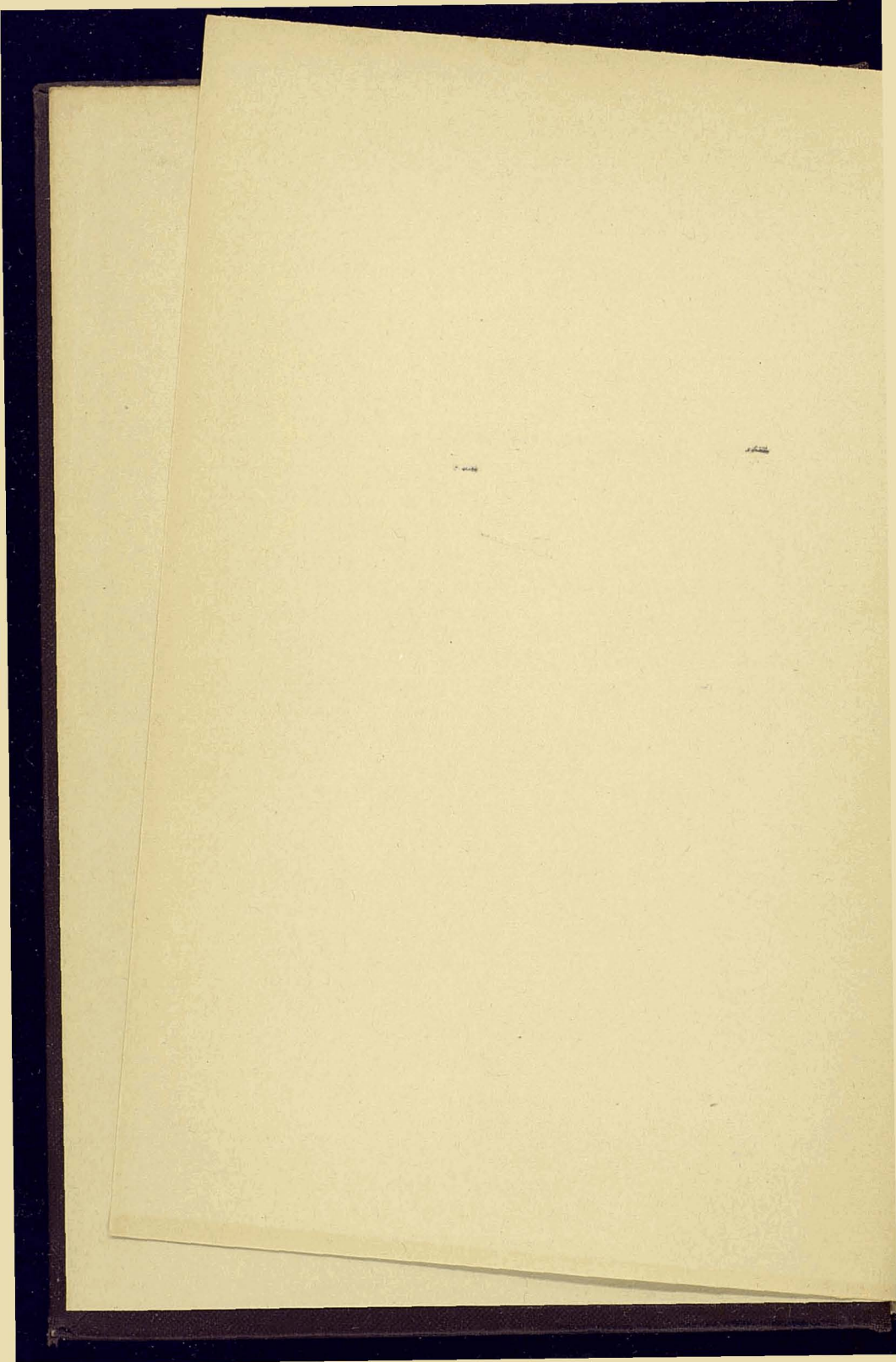
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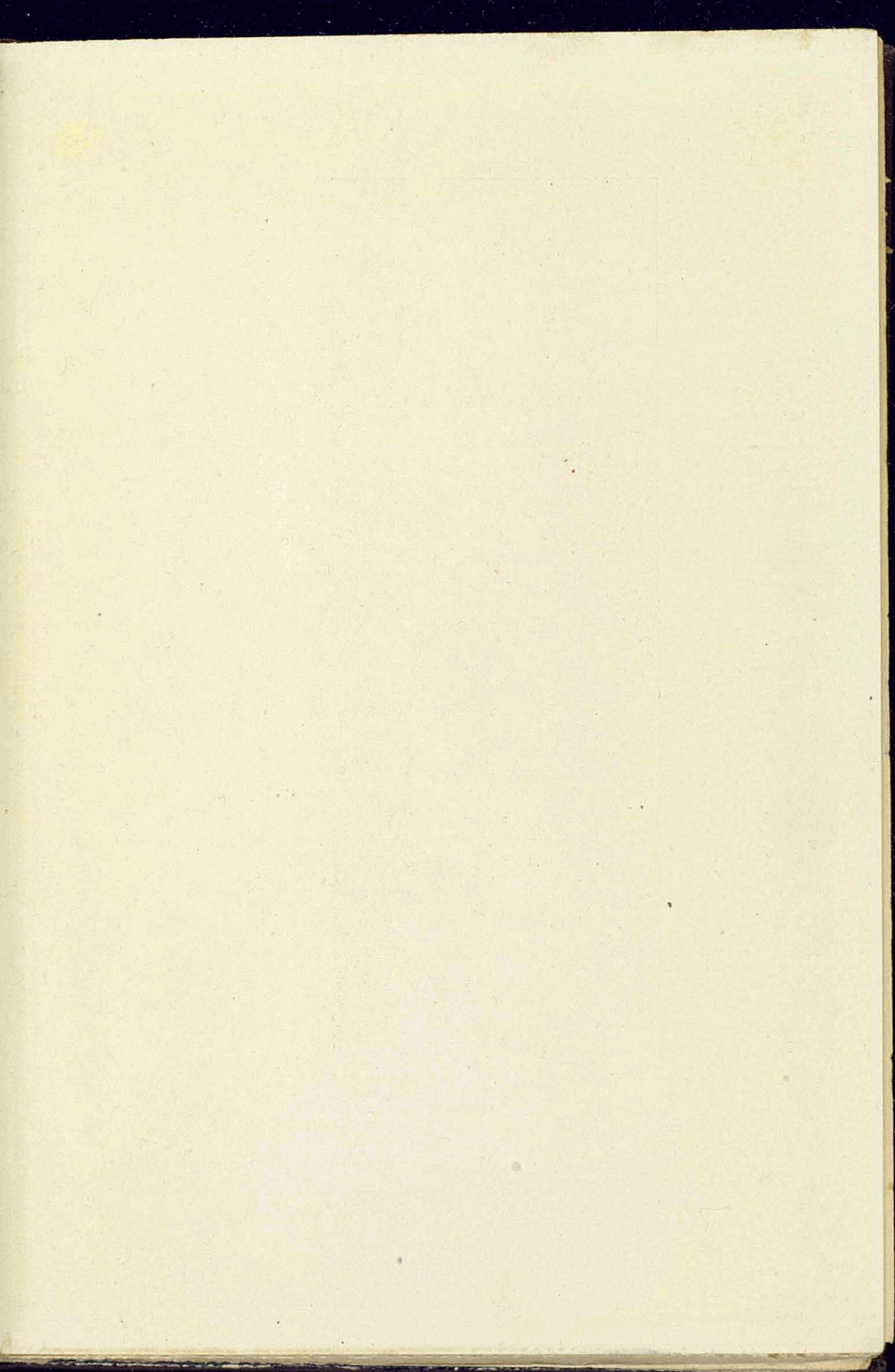




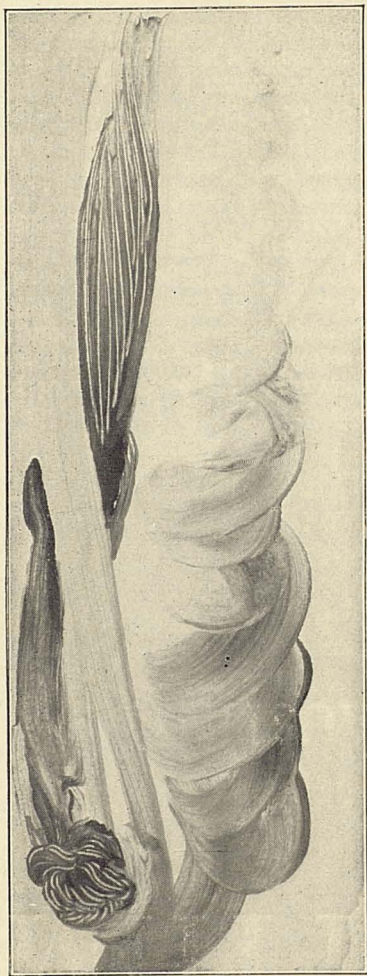
## The American Rhythm

*BOOKS BY MARY AUSTIN*

The Land of Little Rain  
The Basket Woman  
Isidro  
The Flock  
Santa Lucia  
Lost Borders  
Christ in Italy  
The Arrow-Maker  
A Woman of Genius  
Love and the Soul-Maker  
The Man Jesus  
The Ford  
Outland  
The Trail Book  
26 Jayne Street  
The American Rhythm







THE SIGH

A graphic representation of organic rhythm by Walter Beck

# The American Rhythm

BY

MARY AUSTIN



NEW YORK

HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY

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191-3040-65-10

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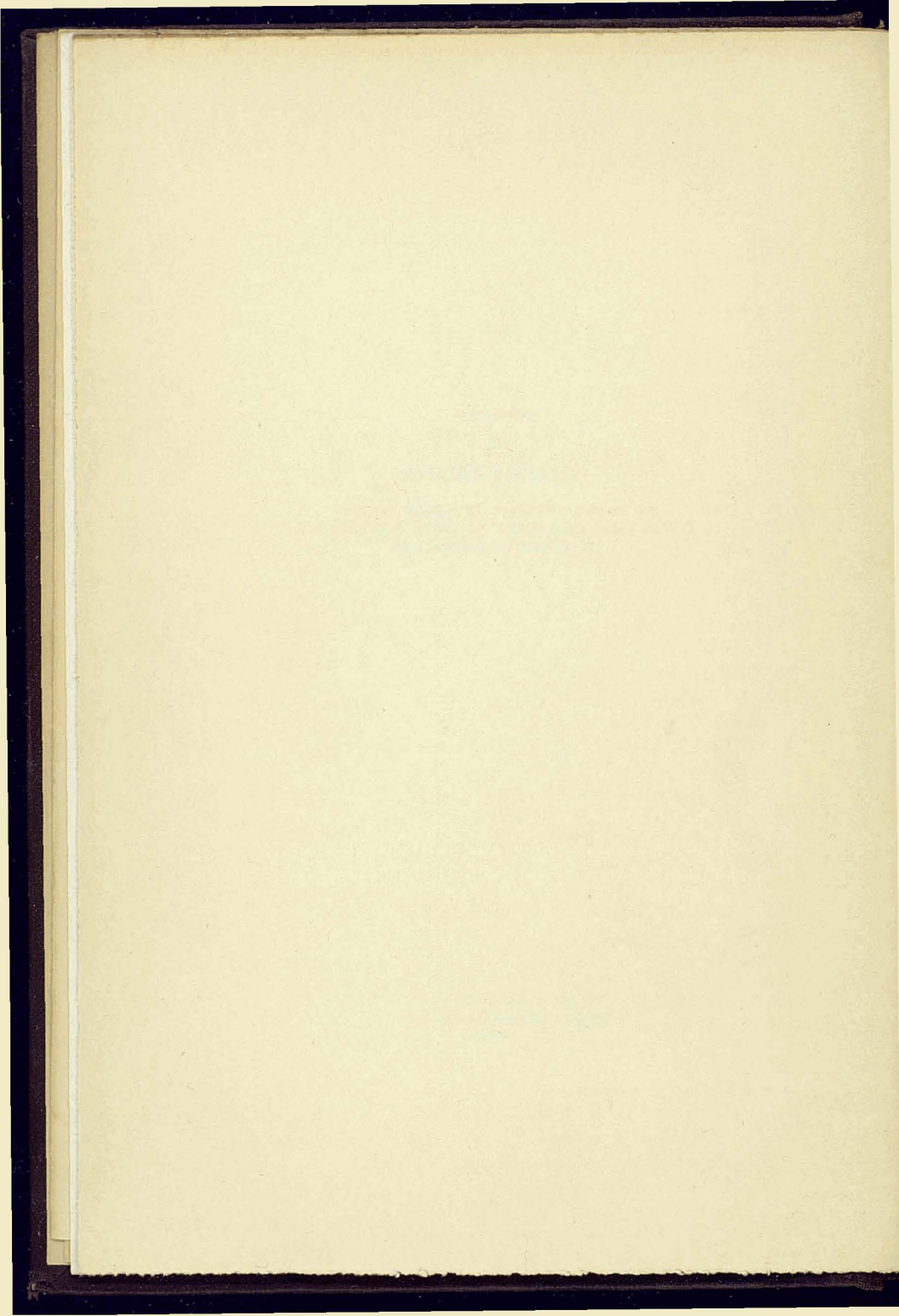


DEDICATED

TO

WILLIAM ARCHER

BY WHOSE INTEREST IN THESE STUDIES  
I WAS FIRST CONFIRMED IN THEIR SIGNIFICANCE  
TO AMERICAN LITERATURE.



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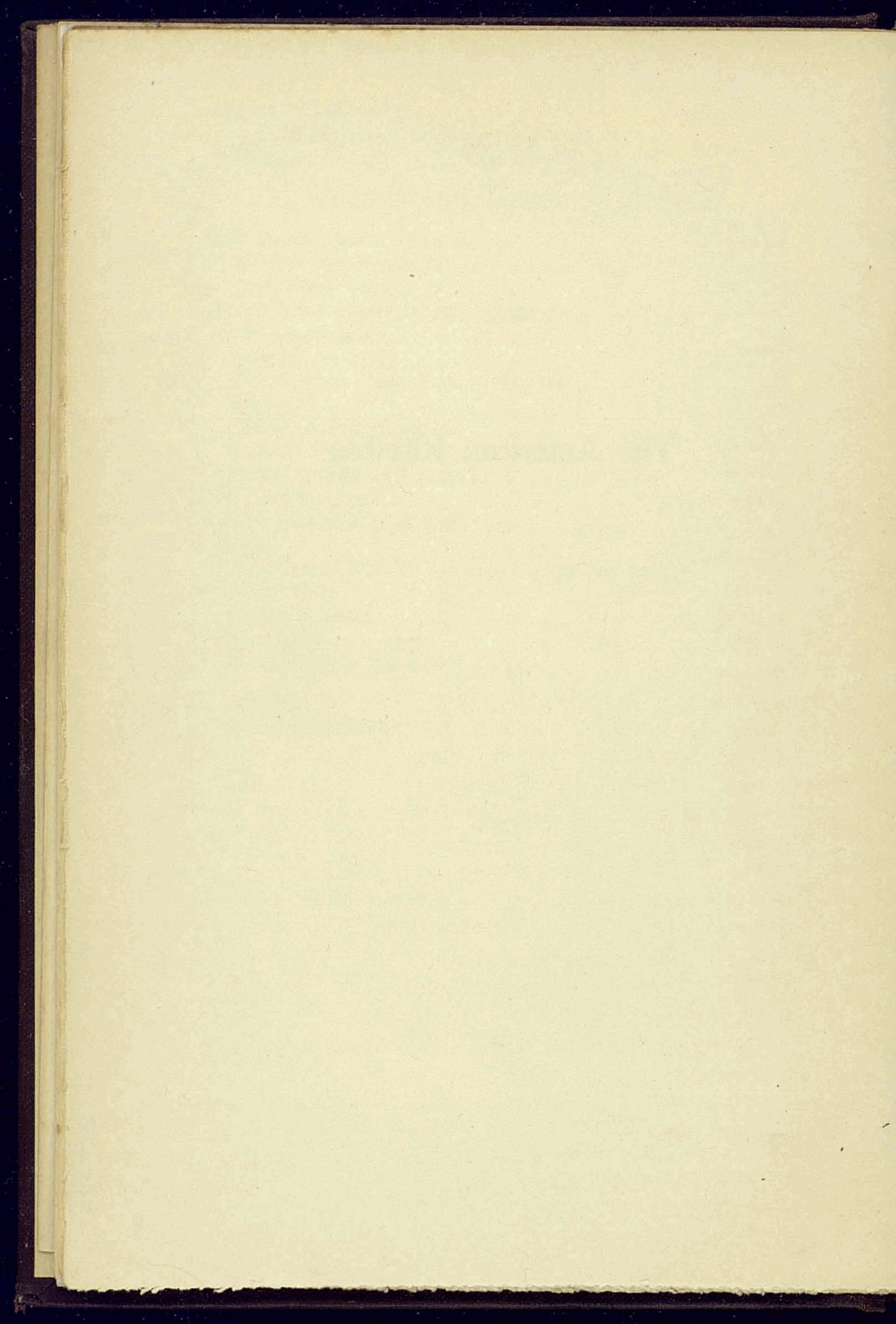
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# The American Rhythm





# The American Rhythm

## I

### § 1

In this connection we begin at once to think of rhythm as experience.

MacDougall<sup>1</sup> calls it "an immediate affection of the consciousness, depending on a particular kind of sensory experience." But this affection of consciousness, the passing of the perception of rhythmic forms arising fortuitously in our environment—as the roll of thunder or the run of wind in tall grass—through the sensorium into the subconscious, is experiential in its nature. It leaves a track, a mold, by which our every mode of expression is shaped. What we have here to do with, is the activity of an organism, the experience of rhythm as distinct from our intellectual perception of it.

Rhythmic forms are constantly presenting themselves to our perceptual experience, but before they can be reckoned with they must initiate the factor of movement. Such movement arises subconsciously in us in response to recurrent series of homogeneous stimuli. But the mere intellectual appreciation of such sequences is not

<sup>1</sup> For this and succeeding references, see Appendix.

enough. There must be a series of motor impulses started somewhere, before the experience is appreciated as rhythmic, and MacDougall<sup>2</sup> goes so far as to suggest that if the motor responses which we habitually make to rhythmic stimuli, the tappings of finger and foot, the nodding of the head, are inhibited, there will be a lessened perception of rhythm.

The suggestibility of the human organism in the direction of rhythmic response is so generous that the rhythmic forms to which the environment gives rise, seem to pass through the autonomic system, into and out of the subconscious without our having once become intellectually aware of them. Rhythm, then, in so far as it affects our poetic mode, has nothing to do with our intellectual life. It is located in the dimension of appreciable stress. Its measure is the measure of the capacity of opposing organic strains.

The only indispensable condition for the acquirement of new rhythms and their use, is that the points of stress recurrence should lie within the normal stress capacity of the organism. The recurrence must not be so rapid as to disrupt the organism nor prolonged beyond the capacity of the organism to remain in the process of movement without coming to rest. That is to say, rhythm to be enjoyed and deliberately reproduced must lie within the limits of pleasurable exercise.

But we need not conclude that the succession of muscular tensions and releases, of which we are all aware in the enjoyment of rhythm, are necessarily set in motion by sensory stimuli, sight, sound, or touch.

The major rhythms of the human organism are given



by the blood and the breath. What is the familiar iambus but the *lub-dub, lub-dub* of the heart, what the hurrying of syllables in the trochæ but the inhibition of the blood by the smaller vessels? Within the organism many minor organs have each their distinctive rhythmic tempo, both nervous and functional. Very probably rhythm is a factor in thought formation. There are at any rate recognizable alternations of attack and relaxation of the cognitive process.

If we think of consciousness as Philosophy gives us increasing leave to do, as energetic in its nature, we have a concept of wave-like motion as the normal procedure, possibly the very mode of being itself. Moreover, the chemical changes which, as we now understand, mark the successive stages by which the emotions take possession of the organism, have each their own recognizable rhythmic modes. Thus we represent, each one of us, an orchestration of rhythms which, subjectively coordinated, produce the condition known as well-being.

Since the very existence of the organism is dependent on such successful coördination, the adaptive capacity of each distinctive rhythm must be great. Let any one of them attain a position of dominant stress, and the whole organism is brought into subjective obedience to it, or ruptures itself in the attempt. So one dies of love or anger, or makes poetry of them, according to the measure of personal subjectivity.

Every ordinarily introspective individual is aware of these rhythmic adjustments going on in himself, varying with the character of the stimuli. Given a suitable arrangement of the stimuli, as in orchestrated music or



poetic drama properly recited, or the consciousness of reciprocated passion, and the whole energetic plane of the organism is raised.<sup>3</sup>

Here we have a basis for the poetic quest, and for the establishment of a traditional poetic mode, provocative of the maximum of well-being. The rhythms which give pleasure are those into which the organism has naturally fallen in the satisfaction of the social urge, the ego urge, the mating urge. Where the path to such satisfactions is deeply graven, the poet falling into it will find the whole sum of sensory material enriched by association. Where by changed motor habits the initial association is obliterated, and only the swing remains, the old rhythm will arise, at the recurrence of a given stimulus, with sourceless connotations of authority to which we give the name of instinct when we observe them in others, and inspiration in ourselves.

Meumann, Stumpf, MacDougall, Dalcroze,<sup>4</sup> many sincere investigators, give us leave to think of rhythm as inherited. Even the mechanists admit the passing with the germ plasm of potentialities for all the organic rhythms on which anything that we can reasonably call a rhythmic sense is founded. All we require then, for the inheritability of rhythms developing in response to stimuli appearing late in the history of the generations, is an admission that the incremental realizations called forth by experiences peculiar to that generation, shall become a determining factor in the potentiality of the succeeding generation. If this is admitted it makes very little difference whether you treat the increment of potentiality as inheritance or as instinct. For what is

instinct in this connection but the memory of motor-emotional experience reduplicated often enough to set up a habit of response, the habit persisting after the memory of the associated fatigues have faded? Or, if you prefer to place our appetite for repetitive sequences of such experiences in the domain of a "rhythmic sense" which, functioning automatically, achieves a subjective binding into a whole of sequential stimuli, we have still, before we can use any given sequence as a poetic medium, to push back the initial experience beyond our memory of its associated fatigues. An instinctive rhythm is a habit of response of which the initiative is lost. Being lost is one of the conditions of our making poetry of it, for much of the pleasure of versification is in the discovery in ourselves of inestimable treasures of swinging thought, swinging with a momentum that exceeds the expenditure of consciousness as the swing of a skipping rope exceeds the effort of the wrist that turns it. And how could those initial fatigues be more surely lost than in the passage of the habit of response from the parent to the offspring?

Imitation plays its part, but what better evidence could there be of the failure of the imitated gesture to evoke a high type of poetic realization than the kind of verse that has been evoked in America in those temples of Imitation, the Universities?

Nor, though almost every poet has tried it, can true poetic affectiveness be secured by the verbally imitative reproduction, however skilful, of sequential stimuli occurring in nature. True evocation is from the autonomic centers of *experience*.



The physical basis of poetry appears, then, as the orchestration of organic rhythms under the influence of associated motor and emotional impulses, recapitulated from generation to generation. Of these influences two are outstanding and of measurable variability: the motor habit by which man wrests his living from the earth, and the social habit by which he relates himself to his kind. What experience is older or comes closer to the life of man than his Two-handedness? Taker and Holder: the play of them, one into the other; strike with the right, cover with the left; thus he conceived his Universe, two-handed.

To this day, according as our racial ancestor tucked his weapon under one arm to count out his kill on the fingers of that hand, do we write, up and down, from right to left, or left to right, as the nature of the weapon dictated the hand to be held. And are not Taker and Holder the protagonists of the first drama, even as the Amerind conceived them, Ahayuta, Matsalema, the eternal Twin Brethren, right and left hands of Sun Power? One of them pulls the life-force up through the dust to corn, and the other pulls the corn back to dust. In this fashion, at least, primitive song measure is beaten out—right, left—right, left . . . and in time, as use made them not quite two paired, but two compensating organs, left, left, *right!*

So is all art form shaped on a system of oppositions, balance without parity. What we mean by composition in art is simply right and left handedness, one hand and a pot hook. To a three-handed race all our pictures



would lack balance, all our rhythms leave the sense suspended.

Thus if we go back far enough into the origin of simple poetic rhythms, we find the gesture by which In the Days-of-the-New the earth was conquered. If we look for the resolution of intricacies of rhythm called classic, we find it in the dance, and if we go back in the history of the dance we find the pattern by which men and women, friends and foes, welded themselves into societies and became reconciled to the Allness. Here we find economy of stress giving rise to preferred accents, and social ritual establishing the tradition of sequence.

Given a new earth to live on, new attacks on the mastery of time and space, and a whole new scale of motor impulses is built into the subconscious structure of the individual. Given a new experiential adaptation of social mechanisms, and all the emotive and cognitive processes set themselves to its tune. Given, as happened in the United States, an emotional kick *away* from the old habits of work and society, and a new rhythmic basis of poetic expression is not only to be looked for, but is to be welcomed as indubitable evidence of the extent to which the American experience has "taken," among the widely varying racial strains that make up its people.

§ 2

Almost anybody might have predicted the rise of a new verse form in America. This was implicit in the

necessity of restating the national consciousness in terms of the burgeoning American outlook; and without any knowledge of the rhythms in which the land had already expressed itself, two or three things might have confidently been prophesied about it.

It would be a form as lacking in tradition as the American experiment itself. It would be democratic in the sense that it would be within the capacity of the democratically bred. Anybody could use it, as anybody always has been able to use native verse form freely. Finally, it would be a statement of life as for the first two or three hundred years, life presented itself on the western continent, in terms of things lived through rather than observed or studied.

English speaking verse forms, as they were used by the English classicists at the beginning of the American era, were largely derived. Greek, which was foot music, movement of communal labor at the wine press and around the altar in the market place; Roman, which to the Greek dance added the lyric intricacy of personal passion; and Hebrew influences had gone to their making. In Hebrew verse, the influence of which on English form is never sufficiently taken into account, there is movement and rhythm of the sort that goes on inside a man's head, sitting on the housetop with his feet tucked under him, the perpetual balance of the soul between spirit and semblance; the setting one thing against another, ranging them in threes and fours, the search for authentic spiritual progressions.

To England and the English speaking, not one of these three was indigenous, and genetic only as the result



of long selection. By this process they became the instrument of a selected class, the rhythms of privilege. For if the words folk song, folk dance, folk music mean anything, they mean just this, that there are in that country superimposed forms of song and dance and music, marked off from the folk use by selective experiences of caste and class.

Periodically, energizations of the common thought through national experience displaced the brilliant, brittle crusts of classicism, and reshaped the prevailing literary modes. Thus in the times of Chaucer and of Shakespeare there was an emergence of the national spirit, and a fusion of the speech-streams which fed the Island tongue, energetic enough to overflow the classic molds and make new patterns of literary form, recognizably English.

When I speak of rhythm here, I am referring to the basic motor impulses which underlie the English gesture. These are of the simplest; the *lub-dub, lub-dub* of the heavy footed Nordics, lightened occasionally by the use of two shorts to balance the long movement. In this measure all their great poems of action are written; an exceedingly ancient measure beyond which there is but one more ancient, the pyrrhic, sounding so faintly at the far end of our Greek vista that many scholars have supposed it a purely theoretic measure of the Grammarians. But to the thousands of Americans who have listened to the swift patter of its unaccented *dub dub, dub dub, dub dub* in the plazas of Zuni and Oraibi it is the very pulse of emerging American consciousness.



This we shall come back to. The English, who are not a dancing people, did no better by themselves, unless you count the slight clipping of one of the shorts of their heroic measures and the equal lengthening of the other, a hint which I suspect they accepted from their horse-back habits, as they made half a league, half a league onward. For all their moods of high sensibility, for the languors and raptures of beauty sensuously perceived, as well as to display the Gothic intricacy of their speech, they had recourse to the dance measures of the Classics, which by the era of American settlement had been transferred from the centers of self-realization and run off at the tips of waving swords or twinkling, lute-playing fingers.

Poetry is a man's game. Women are only good at it by a special dispensation as men are occasionally good at millinery. If you look for the determinant of poetic form in a given period, look for the gesture by which maleness is in that age expressed. In Europe for a thousand years before American settlement began, the sword had been the extended flourish of man's personality, as the cloisteral pace was the measure of his profoundest meditation. In Elizabethan verse there was pomp, which folk never use, lute notes, which they could not if they would. America, though it carried too long like the dried shell of a locust, the shape of the derived culture of England on her back, proved no place for flourishes, nor this the time to go horsed on the poetic inventions of an earlier age.

It was back to the foot pace on the new earth, ax

stroke and paddle stroke. So it is that new rhythms are born of new motor impulses.

## § 3

The length of time required for a new set of motor habits to generate a habit of rhythmic response will depend somewhat on the native resiliency of the racial material worked upon. The process will be quickened or retarded by the intensity of the involved emotional complexes.

In the case of the settlement of the American colonies, these were of high intensity. Motivated by religious fervors or forced by political exigencies, they implied in almost every case, rending of old ties and facing of new terrors. Always the pull of the schools was toward the classic measures. But all the schools could do was counterbalanced by the influx of immigrant material which had never known the use of Greek and Roman forms. Whatever Russ and Pole and Serb had come to America for, it wasn't at least that they might learn to express themselves in pentameter hexameters. What they brought with them in the way of subconscious baggage had, in common with what they were to find in America, the similarities that all gestures of attack on the raw earth have to one another. In all folk expression the older layers of experience are at play. There was scope in the new America for play on the Homeric scale, but not to the tunes that, even in the form in which European scholarship first came by them, were already rhythms of privilege, the medium of a selected experience.



## § 4

Something also was added by the land. Poignancy is of the poet's soul, perhaps, but rhythm is always in his sense; eye and ear have each their part in it. Streams of rhythmic sights and sounds flowed in upon the becoming race of Americans from every natural feature. The great hegira from northern and central Europe had been largely motivated by the desire to escape from the over-humanized aspects of those lands. There was hunger in man for free flung mountain ridges, untrimmed forests, evidence of structure and growth. Life set itself to new processions of seed time and harvest, the skin newly tuned to seasonal variations, the very blood humming to new altitudes. The rhythm of walking always a recognizable background for our thoughts, altered from the militaristic stride to the jog of the wide, unrutted earth. Explorer, fur-trader, King's agent, whoever for three centuries followed it, must have carried a record of its foot work in his walk, a wider swing and recovery to his mind. As the pioneer track made westward-flowing patterns, the rhythm of horseback riding, of a rise and fall distinctively of the American continent, superseded the foot pace. Now and then one picks it up in the work of Vachel Lindsay and Carl Sandburg, and not only the saddle jog, but the unintermittent cluck and roll of the Overland Flyer.

Only a few months ago, when I had occasion to turn back to one of my desert books, written eighteen years ago and scarcely looked at since, I discovered the first paragraph striking without intention into the irregular tug and release of the four horse Mojave stage and of



the eighteen-mule borax team, from which my association with the scenes described was almost never freed. Probably the deep self from which poetry springs picks up a new rhythm very quickly when there is little or no expenditure of physical energy, and the psyche is free to concern itself with wonder and delight.

We should have come into our heritage of rhythms based on the tug and heave of constructive labor much earlier, if all the time the common people were learning them, the intellectual caste had not been, in an environment artificially created for that purpose, sedulously putting the young through the ancient carpet-treading, croiser-bearing paces.

Emerson came stumbling into the American trail about Monadnoc. Lowell, brought up to think of poetry as a fountain spouting somewhere in the neighborhood of a university, found himself dipping up the vernacular to water the stale wine of his library. Longfellow, yearning after American material, fell short of realizing that the true form for it lay a little farther ahead, deeper in the wilderness, and turned back to Greece for the measures of *Evangeline*, to Finland for *Hiawatha*.

There was an American, however, whose nature had been so shaped to the wilderness track that his every public utterance, his homely anecdotes, even, were haunted by its rhythms. On one of these occasions when, as was reported in the newspapers of that day, "the President made a few remarks," he said:

"The world will little note nor long remember  
What we say here:  
But it can never forget what they did here,"

He was speaking of the dedication of a monument to a notable public service, but speaking from the innermost inner man, he fell unconsciously into the stride of one walking a woodland path with an ax on his shoulder. He spoke:

"It is rather for us  
Here to be dedicated to the great task  
Remaining before us;  
That from these honored dead we take  
Renewed devotion to that cause  
For which they gave the last full measure of devotion.  
That we here highly resolve  
That these dead shall not have died in vain;  
That this nation under God  
Shall have a new birth of freedom."

Thus the rail splitter arrives at his goal with the up-swing and the down-stroke:

"That government of the people  
For the people  
By the people  
Shall not perish from the earth!"

And the ax comes to rest on the chopping log while a new length is measured.

It was natural that the new movement should show in oratory, always closer to the masses than any English verse had been since the Elizabethan period. Such a rhythm was to show itself in France after the fury of revolution, and in the emerging democracy of late Victorian times. Charles Dickens,<sup>5</sup> whenever he was moved—and it was the democratic spirit, the spirit of the fellowship of folk that moved him oftenest—fell into those measures that the French, always so much clearer



about their processes, first called, though not the first to use them, *vers libre*. All such movements in Europe have one thing in common with the American movement: They represent the rhythm of men attempting to move concertedly from their own base, rather than to be waved forward and back by the batons of kings or academies.

Whitman's was the first clear and self-recognizing song of the road. Whitman was the type genius,—like Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser and Carl Sandburg, to group them by type, without respect to the quality of their performance. He was sensitive to the bigness of things, which he mistook for universality, moved about a great deal, speculated freely, and was unclear in his conclusions; the American type. His whole personality swaggered with what more or less dominated the movement of the American procession, the consciousness of being entirely adequate to the environment. America was a woman, and the poet, though slightly befuddled by her effect upon him, had proved his manhood upon her.

But though he was sure, Americanly, that he was on his way, Whitman was by no means so deep in the wilderness as he supposed himself to be. He was seldom far from the rutted pioneer track, a place of chucks and wallows, dust choked in his time with the passing armies. Out of this dust, sweaty and raucous, we hear him chanting, principally of what he sees, so that his rhythms, more often than not, are mere unpatterned noises of the street.

"... Bravuras of birds, bustle of growing wheat, gossip of flames, clack of two sticks cooking my meals.



"... The flexible rise and fall of backs, the continual click of the trowels striking the bricks."

It was the genius of Whitman not so much to be a poet as to be able to say out of what stuff the new poetry was to be made. It was only when he occasionally turned aside into solitude that all the senses fused themselves in the spirit's heat. Only thus does his verse cease to be mere foot and eye record of his passage, and exhibits the true brand of the American strain: goal consciousness, and pattern attained by balance and a system of compensating phrases.

Of this method it may be said that Whitman neither discovered nor invented it; to the limit of his capacity to respond he was used by it. His capacity was on every side limited by his intelligence, which was adolescent and gamboling. What one suspects of Whitman admirers to-day is that the name is often invoked in justification of what the poet and poetaster alike find going on in themselves—the urge and recovery of the democratic experience.

## II

### § 5

All this time there was an American race singing in tune with the beloved environment, to the measures of life-sustaining gestures, taking the material of their songs out of the common human occasions, out of the democratic experience and the profound desire of man to assimilate himself to the Allness as it is displayed to

him in all the peacock splendor of the American continent. In so far as verse forms are shaped by topography and the rhythm of food supply, the aboriginal American was singing in precisely the forms that were later to become native to the region of Spoon River, the Land of Little Rain, and the country of the Cornhuskers. It was when I discovered that I could listen to aboriginal verses on the phonograph in unidentified Amerindian languages, and securely refer them by their dominant rhythms to the plains, the deserts and woodlands that had produced them, that I awoke to the relationships that must necessarily exist between aboriginal and later American forms. This was before 1900, before there was any movement more than was indicated by Whitman and the verse of Stephen Crane, which at that time I had not seen. Whitman I knew slightly, though I here confess that my interest in him swelled perceptibly in the discovery of how like the Indian's his method is, and how much less its emotional affectiveness.

I shall not, however, be able to put succinctly all that I have been able to observe of the evolution of tribal poetics until the psychologists<sup>6</sup> have provided me with a better concept of group-mindedness and popularized a terminology under which its various states can be handled. It appears, on the whole, that numbers of individual minds combine under variations of emotional stress very much as the dust grains on a sounding board are marshaled into patterns by the vibrations of the musical chord. That the Dawn Mind showed greater fluency, as well as greater intricacy of pattern response, seems indicated.



The development of pronominal words points to some sort of group-identity antedating the personal. Even yet there are tribes that have no word for "I" as distinguished from "ourselves." Also, among tribal groups we find communal song more highly developed than any form of personal expression. Among Amerindian tribes, whose culture is for the most part of the type called neolithic, we find a highly developed use of poetry both to express and to evoke states of mind which are in their nature social.

Even where tribal poetry seems to be most personal, it will often, on examination, be shown to be affective in character. The lover sings for the purpose of bringing the soul of the beloved into communion with his soul; the witch-doctor would bind the life of the victim with his charm; the medicine man, though he seems to be expressing himself in unrelated song sequences, is actually raising his own psychic states, plane by plane, to the pitch of communion with the Friend-of-the-Soul-of-Man by means of which cures are effected.

A man's Own Song, representing the highest pitch of coördination with his universe, reached through love, or meditation, or the triumph of his man-ness, is so peculiarly his possession that none may sing it without his permission. But it may be transferred as a legacy to the tribe, and so pass into the unrelated body of song lore, esteemed for qualities we have learned to call esthetic.

Thus the rhythm pattern may be preserved long after the words have become archaic, or have given place to newer statements of the idea presented. Where indi-



vidual songs are found woven into the body of ritualistic dance-drama, it will be usually because some shreds of the first singer's luck in hunting, his prowess in war or his fortunate relation to the Allness is believed to inhere in the song. Thus are built up, much in the manner of the Roman Mass, those mimetic sequences of song, drama and recitative, requiring days sometimes for their completion, by which the psychic life of the tribe is co-ordinated. Among the Navaho there is a nine-day performance designed to make the smell of a man's own tribe seem a good smell to him, which is hopefully recommended to our young intellectuals.

That poetry may be of communal origin has long been the belief of scholars, but the lack of any adequate concept of the group-mindedness from which the poem may spring, has left the conviction rather hanging in the air. The nearest we have been able to approach veridical group processes is in the making of ballads. Here we have dance movement, or a chanted burden, creating a plastic matrix within which the ballad takes shape by accretions of individual contribution, fitting into the common state created by the chant or dance movement so aptly as to insure acceptance by the group. This is probably a true description of the growth of certain of our European types of verse. But it must also be kept in mind that all our studies of European balladry are related to cultures much later than the neolithic.

Historically, Amerind culture appears to overlap the archaic Greek period which it precedes. What had happened between the new Stone Age and the time in which

ballad making was the social entertainment of unlettered peasantry, was that superior social castes had *usurped the people's rights to the use of poetry as a means of communication with the Allness*. The original communal use of poetry to energize the plane of socially defensive and offensive activities, had been taken over by the military caste. Prayer poetry, and poetic rites for the coördination of the group mind with Godhead came so strictly under the censorship of the priestly caste that the people not only no longer made their religious songs, but no longer understood them. But since no people can be long kept from poetizing, the common people of Europe fell back on the purely personal occasions, and on the deeds of heroes much nearer to them than the once celebrated gods. Thus the ballad, as we know it, becomes a recessive form, resorted to from secondary motives, and only occasionally rising, in the hands of some native genius to the earlier levels of affectiveness.

In a later work I hope to deal with this passage of the communally affective uses of poetry out of the hands of the tribe into the control of restricted classes. For this work, which is a study of the rise of poetry among genuinely democratic groups, it will be enough to say that narrative poetry, and versified collections of tribal wisdom, which we do not find until near the end of the Neolithic culture, appear to be parasitic on the poetic impulse, due to the incidental discovery that in rhythmic form they are remembered better. The hero cycles, and epics in a sort of blank verse recitative, begin as a prose matrix for the song sequences by which mythical events and characters are celebrated, and take over the measure



of the occasion by which they are celebrated. They are not found at all in the more primitive groups.

In other words, we do not discover poetry used by the Amerindian aboriginal for the purpose of conveying information. The informative use of drum tones among African savages suggests an earlier use of tonal quality for the same purpose. But the combination of voice and drum in the oldest Amerind usage is *never for any other purpose than that of producing and sustaining collective states*. Among primitives there is no other distinction between prose and poetry than this. Prose is the medium of communication, but Poetry is the mode of communion. How the one passes into the other as the speaker rises from the pitch of communicating his idea, to a state of spiritual communion with his audience, I have tried to show in the Gettysburg address.

You will find this passage from communication to communion affected more than once in the work of any natural orator. Somewhere along the rising tide of his eloquence, as ripples show on incoming water, rhythms recognized as prose begin to break into measures admittedly poetic. If he is not a born orator he will attempt, by the multiplication of adjectives and over-adornment of this thought by figures of speech, to accomplish the same thing, though he does not know any more than the Banderlog that what he is trying to accomplish is to lift the audience from states of detached cognition to states of collective realization. Here we have the secret of the love of the masses for high flowing wordiness. For, as the collective states are older they are the more pleasurably entered into. As they are



subjective, they are shorter cuts than the laborious paths of cognition, and by the release of associated emotional states, they provide an anodyne for the motor impulses. Or at the utmost, they make it possible to satisfy all such impulse with the minimum of expenditure. The difference between the mob-mindedness created by a modern agitator and the tribal-mindedness of the Corn Dance is the difference between rhythms that are merely poetic and those that are rhythms of poetry. It is the difference between rhythms that produce an emotional effect and those that are spiritually affective.

In so far as it is possible to establish a distinction so subtle, lying as it does in a dimension little explored by the psychologist, I wish to offer this as the true criterion of value among the new rhythmic modes through which the young genius of America is seeking expression. And I know of no better way of establishing a sense of values in this dimension than to describe the way in which they came to me through my study of the rhythmic modes of the aboriginal American.

### III

#### § 6

To understand how verse forms become fixed in tribal life we must go far enough back in the period of the Dawn Mind to be able to reject the Freudian premise<sup>7</sup> of the primacy of the sex urge and the hunger urge as factors of self-realization, and boldly assert that the

absorbing business of the Dawn Man was the realization of himself in relation to the Allness.

The sex urge is seasonal,<sup>8</sup> the belly pull a short one from tide to receding tide. Down to the neolithic age as we know it in America, the food search had not yet taken on the vibration of perpetual anxiety. Hunting was still the perpetual sport, and the earliest agriculture was the occasion for the earliest form of what we now know as psychological drama. Stone Age men, who had no sense of private property in food, yielding the fruit of the bow to the common meal, had myth, ritual, pictorial art and complicated totemic organization. Among many of the American tribes it was a point of "Highness," if you heard some one eating in your house at night, not to strike a light, lest it prove to be your enemy and you be tempted to begrudge him the food, which might be all that you happened to have on hand. Back of that were the Days-of-the-New, in which, apparently, man ate happily whatever proved eatable. Among our own aboriginals there is still evidence of the annual mating. Once having mated or eaten, there were neither ritualistic nor economic considerations to keep the Dawn Man thinking about either between times. But the mystery of his man-ness was always with him. His ego gave him no rest, blundering about in the irradiated fog of the Dawn Mind, alternately falling over himself or stumbling against the Allness. How much was Allness and how much self? How much of selfness was there in this stream of incident originating in his environment, mysteriously attached to his own destiny, frightening and inexplicable as the can tied to the dog's tail? Clearly



this was a matter that, until it was in some fashion settled, made of living a precarious business. He beat his breast over it. With his bare foot he stroked out on the bare earth the assurance of identity, the I—I—I of the dance proclaiming, as the Quipa put it, the essence-of-being-as-existent-in-humanity; and the others danced with him. For the first I of the man-thing was not the I of himself, but only of Us, mankind. If he danced the I-song in his loneliness, it was to call to himself that other by which he is made more completely one in becoming not himself only.

Probably man first danced as the buck dances, and the pelican, from the recurrent seasonal urge, the intoxication of the sun coming up from the south and the new growth in the forest, when he was proud of himself or insolent with good feeding.

Thus he discovered that, by the making of rhythmic movements and noises, power comes. The senses are keyed up. That mysterious awareness of his prey, the instant intake and response to the environment, which is traceable to no discoverable sense, but is of the utmost importance to the hunting kind, appreciates. This is a state so satisfying that it invites repetition.

Man learned to resort to the dance when he felt helpless or fragmentary, when he felt dislocated in his universe. As he learned to know such states of psychic completion for states of power, he danced for the sake of the meal or the mate. Who can doubt that the Allness is moved by our singing, since it immediately begins to throb in us as the dance progresses? Will not the corn fill out in the ear even as the soul fills?



## § 7

In this fashion poetry was first sought deliberately for its affective values. The greater suggestibility of the Dawn Mind make it more than likely that though there must have been a first singer, the first song, the earliest remembered and reiterated pattern of thumps and vocables was communal.

We have here to take into account—later to come back to—the superior capacity of the Dawn Mind for mimesis. One observes it in the false dawn of the ape mind, the flock and the swarm. When one of the great males of the Dawn tribe beat upon his breast with rolling noises, the rest followed. Consciousness is beaten into synchronous waves by the rhythmic impact and the track of the first poetic line is laid in the group mind. The memory for these things in the group mind is more tenacious than in the mind of the individual. Every now and then when we run together under pressure of emotion, some hundred-thousand-year-old memory rises out of it to swamp all our recent acquirement.

## § 8

Within the territory of what is now the United States, the Amerind's highest literary culture was just about at the point at which, in Greek literature, the hero cycles were combined into the Homeric epic. But the greater part of what has survived the European invasion is much more primitive. It must not be assumed, however, that because primitive, it is necessarily simple. Psycho-

logically the state called primitive is one of deeply imbricated complexity. If simple at all only as the bud is simple within which are packed leaf and stem and flower. I find myself in difficulties at this point because the psychologists have failed to provide me with exact and discriminating terms in the very department with which the psychology of the hour concerns itself, the Deep-self, loosely described as the subconscious. If we had no other evidence of it, we should have to suppose a subconsciousness for poetry to come from, since it so obviously cannot be produced by effort of the intelligence. We should have no alternative otherwise than to suppose it whispered in the ear by the dæmon of the Greek, or to accept as veridical the Amerind's account of how certain of his song sequences were taught him in dreams by his Totemic Animal. But if we began by supposing that the part of the Amerind's mind from which his poetry comes is identical with the limbo of maimed impressions which the Freudian psychologist finds below the threshold of his contemporaries, we should be far from understanding him.

A primitive state of mind is, as nearly as I can make out, a state of acute, happy awareness. Streams of impressions of perennial freshness flow across the threshold of sense, distinct, unconfused, delicately registering, *unselected*. The exigencies of what we call civilization have forced upon us moderns a selective intensity of observation such as rarely occurs in primitive experience. An Amerind, no doubt, if he had to cross *Fifth Avenue* in the midst of traffic, in the absence of a traffic manager, would be constrained to the same concentration of



passage which keeps us largely unaware of the color, the majesty, the multiplying rhythms of our streets. But in normal primitiveness the range of awareness is immensely extended and for the most part without egoistic or emotional connotation.

It is this impersonal extension of the faculty of awareness which has brought the Indian the reputation of superior sense perception, which is not borne out by scientific tests of sense reaction. The Indian sees no better than the white man, but he sees more, registers through every sense, some of which have atrophied in us, infinitely more. It is upon this enlarged reservoir of sensory impressions that he draws in his poetic dance dramas, every one of which comprises an orchestration of subjectively coördinated rhythms which the white man cannot always perceive and not easily resolve into mathematical indices. This appears to be true of all primitives. Charles Meyer relates how he saw a Malay drummer laughed out of the native orchestra for his failure to maintain a distinctive temporal relation with the *tawak*, which Meyer, himself a musician, failed to appreciate. We find vestiges of this coördination of, to our sense, unrelated rhythms in all Oriental music, and I have long suspected that certain early complexities of Greek lyric verse are survivals of the same primitive overlapping.

My own temporal perceptions are entirely inadequate to an estimate of the range of this capacity for combining dissimilar rhythmic series and regarding them as members of a complex unit. One winter at Tesuque I saw the Eagle dancers on a windy day catch up the



rhythm of the wind through the tips of their wing-spread plumes and weave it into the pattern of their ancient dance, to the great appreciation of the native audience. After twenty years' observation, it remained for Ovington Colbert, a Chickasaw, to point out to me that the subtle wavering of the movement of the Squaw Dance, which I had supposed to be due to the alternate relaxation and tension of interest, was really responsively attuned to the wind along the sagebrush.

But it is not only in respect to what comes to him from the world outside that the awareness of the primitive exceeds the span of sophisticated attention. There is even ground for supposing that the fringes of his consciousness are lapped by ripples of energy that proceed from the life process going on within himself and that he attempts to exteriorize them in rhythmic movements or sounds produced by the orchestration of his members. Once the tempo of the dance is established, an Amerind audience will successfully subordinate the distinctive rhythms set up by different parts of the body, emphasized by rattles attached to body and members, or as I have once seen it done, by a bandeau of whispering cocoons wrapped round the torso. The temporal relations of these embellishments are exceedingly subtle. The tortoise shell rattle at the knee, for example, contributes two distinct elements, the shake which accompanies the thump of the foot and another following the lift of the foot, rising to a point of silence and after a dying fall, achieving silence once more just before the foot touches the ground. The Amerind accomplishes these things by virtue of that more intimate relation,

in primitive man, between the sensorimotor and the autonomic nervous systems, and by his superior faculty of mimesis. Just as children learning to talk will catch and perfectly repeat whole sentences not before heard, the primitive will seize upon complex rhythmic phrases, and, without any attempt to resolve them into their elements, reproduce them by the instrumentation of his members. Perception of rhythmic form in nature is driven so deeply into his subconscious, that in those dances where pure appreciation of his fortunate relation to Allness takes precedence of the ritualistic element, he can seize upon and coördinate with his dance the rhythm of sun, wind, or falling water, making himself part of the inextricable pattern of the hour.

It is probably the subconscious memory of the part played by all our members in this primitive coördination, that gives rise to the intricate variations and embellishments of Afro-American rhythms that go by the name of jazz,<sup>9</sup> rhythms that can only be successfully achieved by unharnessing the body from its civilized inhibitions. In any group of jazz performers you can see the arm jerk, recalling the tortoise rattle, the whole torso quiver with the remembered rolling clash of shells.

The Europeanly derived American is too far from this form of response to make it an item in his own scale of expression. But there can be no doubt that his subjective appreciation of rhythmic form has been immensely stimulated by the new motor complexes, and the stream of new rhythmic impressions flowing to him from the American scene. That some sort of subjective coördination of this immense complexity of impression is what



Whitman tried for, what Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay and Sherwood Anderson are occasionally succeeding at, there can be, I think, no question. Whitman too often failed at coördination, was reduced to mere end-to-end notation.

The younger men, though confused with the loud sound of unassimilated things, do better, confining themselves to naturally related groups of impressions. In Vachel Lindsay there are points of simultaneity with the rhythms of all deep forested river bottom lands in which the Mississippi and the Congo have place and kinship. In Anderson's early poems there is too much likeness to the characteristic corn land movements not to have been premeditated, except for the singular circumstance that when I first noted such resemblances there were no accessible records of the corn dance movements for Mr. Anderson to have imitated. And, if one could imagine that the tribe of modern industrial workers had come together for the purpose of promoting a communal attack on the modern environment by means of rhythmic dance drama, the rhythmic patterns would undoubtedly have been the sort that Mr. Sandburg has produced in his *Smoke and Steel*. But there would have been this difference between the dance drama of American life as Mr. Sandburg records it and the dance drama of the Amerind, that the Amerind admits none of the bond-loosening, soul-disintegrating, jazz-born movements of Mr. Sandburg's *Man Hunt*. Dance that rhythm tune in your mind merely, letting the body respond as you will feel it must to describe the rhythm adequately, and you

will see at once why its affectiveness would be toward spiritual disintegration. It would also be clear to you what Mr. Lindsay meant by "letting in the Congo, and Mumbo Jumbo."

I am not prepared to say that the Amerind never used rhythms of disintegration. One imagines the old Iroquois torture dances might have been of that description. Reports differ as to the affective quality of the phallic dances, which I have not seen. I am inclined, however, to accept the word of scientific observers that these are fertilization rites which have been allowed to lose their original religious character. They become what most poetry of the past few generations has been, effective rather than affective.

All this carries us very far from the academic notion of the "simple lyric cry" of primitive man. By our bookish habit of assuming that all the poetry of aboriginal song is in the words, we arrive at such utterly misrepresentative ideas of aboriginal simplicity.

Meumann, who has given much attention to this matter, seems to think that there is no such thing as simple rhythm, but that a "subjective binding together of impressions into a whole is inseparable from the simplest case of rhythmic perception."<sup>10</sup> The element of subjectivity must at least be present to produce an affective result. The Amerind has no system, of which he can give an account, of coördinating rhythmic impressions. I would say they are combined by the esthetic sense if I had not long ago come to the conclusion that there is no such sense existing apart, organically unrelated to



any other sense. If there is an esthetic sense it must have some such function in consciousness as the sense of taste has in the physical organism.

It must be to the development of the individual consciousness what the mouth is to the body, the threshold at which the esthetic experience is rendered poignant. If you will admit that there is such a thing as Mind, Psyche, "Entity X" of the psychophysicists, with its own mode of self-preservation and of self-realization—possibly of reproduction—then I will admit an esthetic sense as its mode of contact with experiences peculiar to Entity X. This leaves me free to admit that the esthetic sense is the coördinator for rhythmic perceptions, since it at the same time gives me leave to discuss the principle of coördination as a self-preservative procedure of the psyche.

The Amerind makes poetry because he believes it to be good for him. He makes it because he believes it a contribution to the well-being of his group. He makes it to put himself in sympathy with the *wokonda*, the *orenda* or god-stuff which he conceives to be to some degree in every created thing. Finally—and on almost every occasion—he makes it to affect objects that are removed from him in the dimension of *time and space*.

This affectiveness is secured by two processes, by the subjective coördination of the major rhythms involved, into a rhythmic unit, and the objective coördination of the movements involved, by mimesis. At the same time that the Amerind is using his body as an instrument of rhythm, he is using it as an instrument of realization

of the result he desires to affect. He paints his body, decorates it with mimetic symbols, moves it through the phases of mimetic gesture, culminating in specific acts which are always mimetic even when most realized.

This mimesis is, as I understand it, the background of Aristotle's "imitation," which he regarded as the essential of poetry. Aristotle was near enough to this early source of tragic drama, which is what he always means when he speaks of poetry, to have realized it as an attempt to understand the Universe, to get inside it by doing as it does. This faculty of creative imitation must have been immensely more active in the Dawn Man than in us. One supposes a period of mimetic activity similar to the period of imitative articulation in children, by which they learn words at a more rapid rate than they are ever capable of in their later years. The Dawn Man did not understand rain as we understand it, but he had an acute power of appreciating all the visual and auditory accompaniments of rain, and of mimetically reproducing them. When he wished for rain, he set up within his own consciousness the utmost intensity of realization of rain of which he was capable. This is the content of Aristotle's "imitation," a "making" into which entered the three factors which are the essentials of Amerind verse; internal rhythms, coördinated by the prevailing motor habit, external rhythm subjectively coördinated, realization by means of creative mimesis. Or if we wish to present these factors in modern American terms we have, as the essentials of a genuinely native poetry; a motor habit set up by democratic, constructive



labor; subjective coördination of the rhythmic forms of the American scene; realization of the meaning of the American experience in terms of activity.

## § 9

The Tribesmen used poetry as a means of raising the plane of group consciousness. Some method of doing this must have been indispensable to the upward movement of tribal life. The success of Democratic organization depends finally on the establishment among its members of a state of uncoerced obedience to its ideals. As early as the Dawn period, man had discovered the poetic orgy as the best means to this end. It is the only means that has ever been discovered of insuring the group mind, once the coalescence of individual minds has taken place, against those regressions which are always implied with us in the term, mob-mindedness.

Mob-mindedness can be produced by emotional impact on the uncoördinated group, lying easily at the mercy of suggestion which has no seat in the intelligence. It can be produced by a single leader to whom responsibility for leadership has already been transferred, or by one who wrests responsibility from a doubtful hour, and spreads by contagion. But affective group-mindedness has been arrived at only by a calculated participation of every individual in the group, in selected rhythmic performances. Some figment of the wisdom of our ancients remains with us to this day in our disposition to look with distrust on the single "agitator" whose method is of rhythmic impact on his audience, and to engage for

our important communal functions in an enfeebled practice of singing and band playing.

Fortunately modern psycho-physiology relieves me of the necessity of demonstrating that the aboriginal poetic orgy does have race-preserving values, in the energization of the sympathetic nervous centers. It is too often forgotten in this connection that the Greek period of the world's greatest florescence of intellect was one in which rhythmic exercise was part of the accepted training of youth, and participation in poetic orgies an item of good citizenship.<sup>11</sup> What we have in the Amerindian dance drama is the beginning of this most sophisticated practice.

#### IV

##### § 10

No final and authoritative study of Amerind verse has yet been made. Before particularizing in the limited field of my own inquiries, I must clear up certain misunderstandings as to my connection with the whole subject of Amerindian life. Our easy newspaper habit of ascribing authority where there is no more than an informed and intelligent interest, has credited me with being an authority on things Indian, which I am not, as a translator which I never pretended to be, and as a poet which I am only occasionally, and by induction.

When I say that I am not a translator, I mean that I have not approached the work of giving English form



to Amerind songs by any such traditional literary posture as signalizes the work of Amy Lowell and Witter Bynner in making translations from the Chinese. If forced to affix a title to my work I should prefer to call it not translation, but re-expression. My method has been, by preference, to saturate myself in the poem, in the life that produced it and the environment that cradled that life, so that when the point of crystallization is reached, I myself give forth a poem which bears, I hope, a genetic resemblance to the Amerind song that was my point of contact.

These contacts began when, with the ink on my diploma scarcely dry, I was transplanted from a Middle Western college town to that portion of the American desert which I have described in *The Land of Little Rain* and *Lost Borders*. Here the problem of aboriginal life and its relation to the environment was the only meat upon which the avid appetite of youth could feed. I lapped up Indians as a part of the novelist's tormented and unremitting search for adequate concepts of life and society, and throve upon them.

I began by knowing a remnant of the vanished Mission San Gabriel group, then Yokuts, Paiutes, Washoes, Utes, Shoshones, and later enlarged my borders to include some acquaintance with Mojaves, Pimas, Papagoes, Mescalero Apaches, Tewas, Taos, and an occasional individual Plainsman. Better than I knew any Indian, I knew the land they lived in. This I hold to be a prime requisite for understanding originals of whatever description. It was only by such familiarity with the condition under which a land permits itself to be lived

with that I was able to overcome the difficulty of language.

All the great divisions of Amerind speech differ among themselves more than the root languages of Europe, and they possess an infinity of dialects. There are, however, tribesmen who take a pride in the number of native languages to which they can set their tongues, and others who speak fair English and Spanish. Though I have no "ear" for language, I have an exceedingly quick sense of language structure, and the underlying thought pattern of all Amerind tongues is the same. Moreover, the Amerind himself is of a scholarly turn of mind, and once he is convinced of the high ground of your interest, he will unwearyingly hunt down for you the last fugitive syllable of elucidation. Sitting on the sunny side of the wickiup, considering with the elders of Sagharewite how it came to be called the Place-where-they-gave-him-mush-that-was-afraid, I thought of doctors disputing in the temple, of academicians loitering amid olive groves, and occasionally I thought of the Ancient Mariner. For when you have invited a strange people to unfold their mysteries you must by no means show yourself bored by the unfoldment.

The effect of all this, the only intellectual life I was to have for sixteen years, on my own mind and its output is probably more extensive than I have been able to reckon. It has given to my literary style its best thing, a selective economy of phrase, and its worst, a habit of doubling an idea back into its verbal envelope so that only the two ends of it stick out, which to this day I labor in vain to eradicate. Its total effect was to con-



vince me, as I think every one does become convinced who lives sincerely among Indians, that the earliest suffusing flush of human consciousness under a sense of its relation to the Allness is immensely more important to our social solutions than our far derived culture of the universities has permitted us to realize. So, from the first, my quest was for primitive concept, for folk-thought under folk-ways. In the beginning, form interested me so little that I did not even undertake to record the original form of the songs I collected, stripping it off as so much husk, to get at the kernel of experience. Somewhere in print I have said that women as a class are indifferent to form. Take it that I was then behaving in a characteristically feminine way, but do not forget that the university had not taught me to recognize literary quality in any form of which the original mold was not Greek or Roman or Hebrew. It was not until I found my own unpremeditated songs taking the Amerind mold that I realized what I had stumbled upon.

You must not suppose, however, that all this time I had been confining my inquiries to mere verbal transliterations of legend and song. I have naturally a mimetic temperament which drives me toward the understanding of life by living it. If I wished to know what went into the patterns of the basket makers, I gathered willows in the moon of white butterflies and fern stems when these were ripest. I soaked the fibers in running water, turning them as the light turned, and did my ineffectual best to sit on the ground scraping them flat with an obsidian blade, holding the extra

fibers between my toes. I made singing medicine as I was taught, and surprised the Friend-of-the-Soul-of-Man between the rattles and the drums. Now and then in the midst of these processes I felt myself caught up in the collective mind, carried with it toward states of super-consciousness that escape the exactitudes of the ethnologist as the life of the flower escapes between the presses of the herbalist. So that when I say that I am not, have never been, nor offered myself, as an authority on things Amerindian, I do not wish to have it understood that I may not, at times, have succeeded in being an Indian.

## § II

I do not recall, except as I have already suggested, when, and by what steps I began to see that what was true of the earliest poetic expression of the American spirit must be largely true of all such expression. I think the experiences of coming into touch with the beginning poetry and the becoming poetry of America were part of one process. The arc of my mind has an equal swing in all directions. I should say the same of your mind if I thought you would believe it. But we are so saturated with the notion that Time is a dimension accessible from one direction only, that you will at first probably be shocked by my saying that I can see truly as far in front of me as I can see exactly behind me. We all of us come out of school with our heads canted over one shoulder at that portion of the trail from which we lately emerged. We do not even see that clearly, but



crowded with shadow pictures thrown there by those who have taken it upon themselves to determine what is good for us to see. So when we at last find ourselves fronting the future, we see there only phantasmagoria, the reflection of a reflection, or at best the projection of unrelated fancy. But if we can, by hook or crook, get into a veridical stream of tendency; if we feel ourselves carried by it as it moves forward from clearly perceived sources, then—and perhaps you will admit this of your own mind now that you understand what I mean by it—we shall have no difficulty in perceiving *along* the stream of tendency to its logical goal.

I, at any rate, became convinced as early as the first years of the present century, that American poetry must inevitably take, at some period of its history, the mold of Amerind verse, which is the mold of the American experience shaped by the American environment.

As I recall it, my first public expression of this conviction was in the winter of 1904-05, before the English Club of Stanford University. Afterward at other places, where it will still be remembered, because nobody at that time believed it. Our culture, stiffened into the Victorian gesture of giving, received nothing from the self-contained culture of the aboriginal. When I attempted to sell some of my reëxpressed Amerindian airs, not only did the *Atlantic Monthly* disdain to "see any excuse for this sort of thing!" but so widely read an editor as Richard Watson Gilder returned my verses with the suggestion that some of them might be published on their merit as verse, provided the author would frankly admit their authorship.

Two or three years later, less pretentious magazines like *McClure's* and *Everybody's* began to print not only my translations, but others. In the winter of 1910-11, The Poetry Society took notice to the extent of inviting me to address them on the subject. From every quarter spontaneous experiments in the new form made their appearance, more often than not without any acquaintance with the aboriginal forms. We were beginning to speak of the new medium as *vers libre*. But even so late as 1911, when my play, *The Arrow Maker*, what was left of it after a New York production, finally appeared in print, I had too little confidence in being understood to attempt to restore even the original form, much less the aboriginal type of free measures in which it was written.

Since the publication in 1916 of Mr. Cronyn's anthology of American Indian verse, and the fragments of my introduction which survived the process, interest in aboriginal forms has been more general. I doubt if any one now would venture, as one critic did on the appearance of that volume, to protest against Amerindian verse being "made to look like free verse," or with another, insist that it could not be imagistic, since Imagism is the exclusive product of the sophisticated imagination.

§ 12

It ought not to be necessary to justify the relationship between Amerind and American verse, seeing how completely we have accepted the involvement of Hellenic and Pelasgian influences in the best of Greek literature. No-



body denies the intermingled strains of British Celtic and mixed Nordic elements in the best of English, or refuses to see the "Urdummheit," or primal stupidity, of the aboriginal Teuton informing the literature of Germany. But I have found intellectual Americans generally baulking at the idea that there could be any informative relation between their own present or future culture and the many thousand-year-old culture of the race that we displaced.

There is crass and inexcusable ignorance among our intellectuals of these things, and in our universities the traditional preoccupation with Greek and Roman antiquities leaves no attention free for equivalent phrases of cultural assimilation going on between our own Achaioi and Barbaroi.

It is probably not too much to say that all verse forms which are found worthy the use of great poets are aboriginal, in the sense that they are developed from the soil native to the culture that perfected them. Certainly this is true of the Greek forms in which the best examples of the later English poets are cast. The relation of Greek meters to Greek rites and dances is a matter of common scholarship, but the sacred character imputed to the rhythms and verse arrangements of the Old Testament has served to screen their derivation. That the meditative measures and slow, shepherd pacing rhythms of the Hebrews originated among cultures that were in many respects inferior to the cultures of some of our Amerind tribes, is an item that too often escapes consideration. That the Israelites, at the time that their psalm singing took the final forms so venerated by us,

practiced polygamy and the ceremonial eating of flesh, and hewed their enemies in pieces before the Lord, there is not the slightest doubt. Under the pure lilt of Keats and Shelley it is still possible to follow the patter of naked feet in dances that may no longer be described with propriety, or in rituals in which living beasts were torn apart.

Not to know these things is to admit yourself unschooled in poetic origins. But the manner in which classic English verse is presented in universities, where most people first hear of it, rising on the intellectual horizon of youth like a golden cloud, makes every comparison between it and the verse forms of American Indians strike on its admirers as an offense.

In the common esteem, not only are the only good aboriginals dead ones, but all aboriginals are either sacred or contemptible according to the length of time they have been dead. The very word, aboriginal, comes in for a certain reprobation because of its more general use in connection with primitive cultures, so that it becomes necessary to explain that there may arise literary forms which are far from primitive without being any the less aboriginal. It is possible to find in the history of English verse up to the beginning of the American era, overlappings and interweavings of aboriginal Anglo-Saxon and British forms, struggling with and being on the whole out-climbed and smothered by the Greek aboriginals, kept alive by the sedulous classicism of the schools. It does not seem likely that this can happen in America. The extraordinary, unpremeditated likeness between the works of such writers as Amy Lowell,



Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay and Edgar Lee Masters, exhibiting a disposition to derive their impulses from the gestures and experiences enforced by the American environment, to our own aboriginals, points away from any such usurpation by the Greek and Hebrew aboriginals. At this hour of relaxed effort in Europe, the American gesture promises to become dominant as the mold of literary form.

## § 13

All Amerind poetry, even the most personal, presents itself as three-plied movement and melody and words. When the expression is communal, the movement and instrumented rhythm may be of a complexity rivaling the harmonic intricacies of a modern orchestra. Witnessing the Corn Dance of the Rio Grande Pueblos, one realizes how it was that Aristotle came to treat of Poetry as comprising several arts which we now think of as distinct from it. The Corn Dance is an affective fertility rite, designed to bring rain and good growing weather to the sprouting crops. The dancers will number among the hundreds, according to the population of the community. The natural rhythm of their timing feet will run from the pound of the men's thick soles, through the softer shuffle of the women to the patter of children tailing out the procession around the plaza, rising and falling and overlapping like a musical round, bound together but not necessarily synchronized by the beat of the tombes, steady and quick like the heart of the sun beating. In and out of these primary rhythms play the body accents,

knee rattle and arm rattle of deer's hoofs or tortoise case, and the lovely silver clash of the wreathes of conus shells about the glistening torsos of the men. From point to point, like the rush of summer rain, runs the roll of prisoned pebbles in the hand-held gourds. All the dancers sing, moving deftly in their places from time to time as the orchestral pattern of the rhythm requires. Out and aside the elders sing, prayerfully, inviting the coöperation of the People of Middle Heaven in rhythms that are not necessarily temporally synchronous, though subjectively coördinated with the song of the dancers.

To this will be added the symbolically painted bodies and faces, the intricate mimetic symbolism of costume and decoration, and at selected intervals mimetic presentations of the drama of the Corn. Out of some such many stranded cord was spun the Poetics of Aristotle. By means of it the Dawn Man drew the Seven Arts out of his own entrails.

As I have already tried to show, the relation of gesture to poetry is generative. By means of the provocative rhythms of foot and drum, the autonomic centers are aroused and the collective consciousness set in motion; on the crests of its movement poetic realizations arise as the foam-cap on waves.

Of the dance then, only so much is necessary to be taken into the poetic record of aboriginal experience as serves to indicate the determining urge; of supplication, of triumph, of abasement. But here I should have to warn the researcher whose only access to aboriginal life is by way of the printed page, that much of our descriptive phraseology is misleading. A war dance may



not be for the purpose of inciting a warlike spirit, but a prayer to the Twins of War and Chance for peace and protection. A scalp dance is not necessarily an expression of ferocious triumph, but a ritual of adoption of the *manes* of the dead into our tribe. It is reported that the last dance of this character took place three years ago in a secret place in the southwestern hills around four blond scalps, designed to make peace and kinship between our own dark soldiers and the ghosts of the Germans they had slain—may it prove efficacious!

Mistakes of this character were made more than once by Burton, who studied his Ojibway music from the life, and yet persisted in treating songs of mystical seeking, such as are common in all aboriginal groups, as personal love songs of a sweetish sentimentality. It is to avoid such errors that I confine my own work to reexpressions of the songs of familiarly known tribes.

Once the fundamental rhythm is established, for the contributory rhythms the translator may take as many as he can successfully handle. No one has handled these secondary rhythms with absolute success, though Lew Sarrett gives evidence of appreciating them, and Carl Sandburg certainly could do it if he set himself to such an undertaking. Of the mimesis, both in acts and in all the finely divided symbolism of color and face painting and ornament, I should use in reexpression as much as is descriptively an aid to realization. It is a nice point to determine just when a feathered stick, a headdress, or a girdle is properly an item of poetic realization, and when it is to be relegated to the department of stage setting; but this is not to be compared for

difficulty to the dividing of the two twined cord of words and melody.

They appear to be evoked simultaneously in the mind of a poet. At first glance the melody would seem most important; not only the melodic line, but the rhythmic pattern of melodic elements, for the words can be easily shown to adapt themselves to the melody, even by the use of such variation as goes by the name of poetic license with us. There is also visible filling out of the melodic pattern by meaningless vocables. But a long study of Amerindian modes of thought convinces me that there are differences in the way in which poems come into existence which must govern the method of translation.

We have to bear in mind that melody had to do all the work for the primitive that is done now with print, with punctuation and capitals and italics, with visual arrangement of line and stanza. In other words, melody is the mold of form, the matrix of stanza arrangement. Melody therefore cannot be neglected in lyric translation. It is full of interesting suggestion of pattern development, and a study of melodic pattern correlated with decorative pattern among the same people should prove of value. The reason why you do not find more of it in my own work is that I am temperamentally less interested in the purely lyric aspects of poetry. Nevertheless I have given one or two examples of it in *The Heart's Friend*, which was my first translation, and in the *Sioux Song at Parting*, which reproduces the melodic pattern of the original without variation.

For perfect examples of this type of aboriginal ex-



pression, see the work of Natalie Curtis Burlin. Mrs. Burlin had a lyric intuition which makes her translations so many clear markers on the road to the spring of native inspiration, and her untimely death is an irreparable loss to us.

Alice Fletcher in her admirable work on the *Hako* ceremony has attempted lyric translations of the whole sequence. One feels certain that if an Americanly educated Indian had been translating the *Hako* he would have done it in just that way. Thinking of it as a thing to be sung, he would find it subject to the necessity of music to account for every fraction of time within the melodic measure. Understanding that in English poetry every syllable must seem to mean something, whether it does or not, he would have replaced the vocables in the melodic pattern with words, just as Miss Fletcher has done. The result is a remarkable rendering in words of melodic mimesis, following the very shapes of the land and the movements by which the ritual is accomplished.

One cannot help thinking that an Indian poet without any knowledge of classic English forms would have proceeded very differently. Concerned only to render true poetic values, this hypothetical aboriginal translator—who, except for two or three examples furnished by Charles Eastman in precisely this manner, has not yet appeared—would know that the extra syllabication served no purpose but to fill out the melodic pattern, and that most of the repetitions were purely ritualistic in character, having reference to the magic properties of song and in general determined by the sacred tribal number. These he would therefore largely omit. If used at

all, it would only be to establish the fundamental rhythm of the experience that provoked the poetic explosion. Such a translator's first care, then, would be to state the experience itself, usually by stating its most important reaction on himself. To this he would add no more than he found absolutely necessary by way of descriptive and associative phrases, to define the path of the experience through his own consciousness.

Now this is precisely the way the primitive, when he first arrives at writing, begins to evolve what is called a glyph. If he wishes to state that in the year of fire-coming-out-of-the-mountain, the great chief died, first he draws a man and over him places the symbol of chieftood. Close by he draws a mummy or burial urn or other index of our common end, accompanied by a pictorial suggestion of the way in which the death was accomplished, if this happens to be important, and finally, in an upper corner, the mountain belching fire. Around the whole, binding them irrevocably to a single effort of attention, he draws a line.

It is probable that the melodic line serves something of the same purpose in Amerindian verse, giving wholeness to the emotional and esthetic contributions.

For an instance of the same process in another medium, examine the Thunderbird design which decorates this cover, reproduced from a ceremonial bowl unearthed in one of the pre-Columbian pueblos. Within the circle fixed by the bowl's proportions, we have not a drawing of a bird, but an adequate suggestion of birdness, of birdness the most majestic, whose wings are made of the dark cloud, whose feathers are edged with the dark



mist, presiding over fertility provoking storms, and hence also the presiding genius of power-inducing song.

But there is more in this headless design of wing and tail spread, which is the figure of any great bird seen from below, high-flying. There is the primitive's prayerful attitude toward it, which is cunningly expressed in the stepped altar design, the earth-altar line of the desert horizon, worked into the tail-spread until it also contributes to the feather suggestion of the design. At the top, inside the wing-spread, are the full curved clouds like breasts, and the three straight strokes of falling rain.

In this fashion the Thunderbird, his function, the attitude of the artist and his faith, are expressed in lines, which in the original being black and white on a red earth ground, give a note of the play of light and dark between earth and heaven in the process of the storm. In this fashion also the two arts of writing and pictorial representation began. A little more detail would have made a picture of a Thunderbird, a little less and we should have had an ideograph for thunderstorm.

In this collection the song called *The Magic Ribbon* is the best example of the primitive process of poetic realization. Washoe Charlie's girl had gone away to Indian Board School and Charlie had given her a grass-green hair ribbon for remembrance. A few days later, while his loss was sorest, he had a glimpse of another girl wearing an identical green ribbon. Any lover will understand what happened to Charlie, though as he expressed it in the song recording the experience, whole, as it occurred to him, there were only half as many words as I have put into it:

"The Green ribbon, when I saw a girl wearing it, my girl existed inside me." One touch more Charlie added by calling his song the magic ribbon. The rest any Washoe was supposed to understand by the likeness of all Washoe lovers one to another.

Stephen Crane has left us no note of what happened to him in the neighborhood of Yellow Sky to explain how he happened to write, "If I should cast off this tattered coat," and

"I looked here  
I looked there  
Nowhere could I see my love,  
And—this time—  
She was in my heart.  
Truly then, I have no complaint,  
For though she be fair and fairer,  
She is not so fair as she  
In my heart."

Yet in writing thus he was nearer the poetic modes of the Rio Grande country than any white man has been since. At that time, however, when I was exchanging songs with Washoe Charlie, I had not come across the Black Riders.

§ 14

It is this similarity of primary processes which has led me to adopt the term "glyph" for a type of Amerind song which is lyric in its emotional quality and yet cannot be completely expressed by the simple lyric cry.

Experience presents itself as One; existing by itself in



Consciousness. The experience completely transpires; the autonomic centers are stirred, giving rise to motor impulses. Rhythm ensues and with rhythm the esthetic sense is quickened, evoking order and arrangement. Words are perhaps the final evocation of the intelligence, taking possession of the experience and decorating it appropriately.

It is here, in the verbal realization, that we come upon the common root of aboriginal and modern Americanness.

We have seen how native rhythms develop along the track of the rhythmic stimuli arising spontaneously in the environment and are coördinated by the life-sustaining gestures imposed upon us by that environment. Although we have not yet achieved the communality into which the Amerind has entered by easy evolution, there is evident straining toward it in the work of such men as Masters, Frost and Sandburg; all our recent poetic literature touched with a profound nostalgia for those happy states of reconciliation with the Allness through group communion, which it is the business of poetry to promote.

It is not surprising then, that with this common urge toward communality, with this shared stream of rhythmic stimuli proceeding from the environment, and the common similarity of gesture, that there should be a tendency toward similarity of form between the early and later American poets.

The disposition of the aboriginal poet is to arrange his words along what, for want of a better term, I have called the landscape line, the line shaped by its own inner necessities.

I must make a point of insisting upon this, since there is among translators a contrary disposition to insist upon the melodic line as the mold of aboriginal verse form. It is difficult to see just how they can ignore the universal aboriginal practice of completing the melodic line with repetitions of the felicitous phrases or by sheer meaningless syllabication, rather than force the meaning with added words, as our classic poets are obliged to do, or to pad it with adjectives until it fills out every accent of the musical measure. I have often read my translations to the aboriginal singer, and almost always with the result of cutting the verbiage back to its primitive austerity. I have had Indians try out my renderings to drum beats, by intervals evidently satisfactory to themselves, but often beyond my power to coördinate. I have sometimes had them insist on repetitive patterns. I have talked with aboriginal singers who seemed to distinguish between repetitive recurrence of a rhythmic pattern which was purely esthetic, and repetition which was magical, determined by the sacred tribal number. But I have never met with the slightest disposition to force the words into a predetermined mold. Mold or rhythm-pattern, so far as it exists for the aboriginal exists only as a point of rest for the verse to flow into and out of as a mountain stream flows in and out of ripple-linked pools. It is this leap of the running stream of poetic inspiration from level to level, whose course cannot be determined by anything except the nature of the ground traversed, which I have called the landscape line. The length of the leaps, and the sequence of pattern recurrences will be conditioned by the subjectively co-



ordinated motor rhythms associated with the particular emotional flow.

This landscape line may of course involve several verse lines as they appear on the printed page, and is best described by the modern term, cadenced verse. In the placing of this line, and the additional items by which it is connotated and decorated, the aboriginal process approaches closest to what is known as Imagism, unless you will accept my term and call it glyphic. Once having adopted a definite space of consciousness for the purpose of realizing it poetically, the supreme art of the Amerind is displayed in the relating of the various elements to the central idea. Like his cognate, the Japanese, the Amerind excels in the art of occupying space without filling it. Sometimes the whole area of experience is sufficiently occupied by a single undecorated statement, as in this Chippewa:

As my eyes search the prairie  
I seem to see the summer in the spring,

or in this which is sung by the Pawnee when he takes the war trail at the end of which death may await him:

Let us see;  
Is it real,  
This life which I am living?

Here we have a direct poetic perception threading the objectivity of experience delicately as an owl flits, without once brushing it with the down-edged tip of its wings. But in this introductory phase of a Pima sequence the object of the song is not stated, though to

the Piman mind the course of its flight is perfectly indicated:

Thence I run, in flickering darkness,  
Wearing bisnaga blossoms in my hair  
Thence I run, as darkness gathers,  
In vibrant darkness, to the singing place.

By this suggestion of flight through the vibrating twilight of spring in Arizona, the singer indicates and augments the flight of his soul toward the secret place from which song-magic springs. In the best Amerindian poetry the object is absorbed into the singer and is seldom seen except as a link in the chain, completing the circuit of interest between the object and his own breast.

Thus poetry becomes the means by which men and their occasions are rewoven from time to time with the Allness; and who is there to tell me that this, in art, is not the essence of modernity?

§ 15

It will readily appear that what I have worked out so far refers rather to aboriginal modes of poetic realization than to literary form. I have already explained that this is partly owing to a lack of lyric interest on my part, and partly to my having, very early in my search turned aside into a particular inquiry about the use of rhythm as a medium for what we have generally agreed to call poetic drama. The results of this inquiry I hope to develop fully in a later volume on the *American*



*Gesture.* It would be a mistake, however, for the reader to infer from my work that I have done more than make temperamental selections from the rich variety of literary forms which the aboriginal himself has worked upon the warp of native rhythms.

Historically these should be studied backward from about the point at which Greek forms begin with definiteness to issue. Here you will find every stage of stanza development, assonance, emphatic rhyme, internal rhyme, decorative repetition, incremental repetition, and refrain.

In ritualistic sequences, such as the *Hako* and the *Night Chant*, will also be found more than a suggestion of formal progression of rhythmic modes such as we recognize as underlying symphonic composition. I know of no better contribution to the science of poetics than could be made by setting all this material in order. In the meantime I make my own small contribution by setting down two or three of the conclusions I have come to about particular problems arising out of the effort to reëxpress Amerindian poetry in American values.

In discarding ritualistic repetitions and syllabication which is shown to be mere stuffing of the melodic pattern, one must not overlook the values they may have as stage setting, or as indices of the emotional values. One must have seen the women genuflect in response to the wild cries which swoop and flit like hawks above a Pueblo war dance to realize that these are not mere whoops of ebullient savagery, but prayers to the Twins of War and Chance, charged with the values of such worshipful responses as Lord Have Mercy on Us, or Hear Thy People, Lord! Many of the apparently mean-

ingless or obsolete words in primitive poetry probably had similar significances.

Since all the aboriginal singer's contacts with his subject are experiential, his poetic values are often so personal that they would be largely missed by the stranger to his way of life if it were not that he seldom fails to provide somewhere in the rhythm, in the onomatopoetic syllabication or in some apparently unrelated phrase a key to the song's objectivity. This will generally be indicated by the singer's reluctance, which is frequently inhibitory, to sing the song without this accompaniment. It is, for instance, very difficult for the young men of Taos to render the Moon Song without rising to stand in a row as if on the bridge between the Summer and Winter Houses, facing in that quarter from which the mistress of the night sky issues. In the case of communal song sequences the stage setting may be a complicated mimetic ritual. But whenever you find an Indian unwilling to sing a particular song without its accompanying act, that act is an essential item of the song's meaning and must be so translated. That is why you will often find my own translations so much longer than the original words seem to warrant.

#### § 16

One of the most usual mistakes made by beginners in this field, is that of assuming that because Amerindian culture is primitive, all expressions of it must be in words of one syllable.

It must be remembered in this connection that the



genius of Amerind speech is holophrastic. Every important word is a fist well fingered with syllables not one of which can be omitted without maiming the concept implicit in the word. I know a place in the Tejon called by a word of which the full unfolding was fear-living-in-that-place-shakes-continually. No mere English equivalent such as quicksand or quaking bog could convey all that was in the namer's mind any more than the outline of a fist would measure all the spread hand might hold. The translator's problem, then, is not one of simplification, but of achieving a deeply imbricated wholeness.

The rhythms of holophrastic words occur in natural clusters; rhythm seems often to be the principle of organization, so that, in spite of the clicks and gutturals that characterize many Amerind tongues, one finds such lovely words as *tchu-pa-tchu-ti*, *hi-mo-va'-li*, *tse'-yan-a-tho"-ni*, and *te-jo-ska-wa-ye'n-ton*. Cadences like these cannot easily be represented in the Wordsworthian austerities that some critics have mistakenly insisted should replace them. At the same time it is important to avoid violating the stricture that Kern River Jim used to make against white men's songs, that they "talked too much." The translator will have to put more into his words than the Amerind expressed by them, but he must not put everything in.

No Indian ever says all his thought. Always there is some petal left furled, some secret untransfixed to be exhaled as a delicate perfume upon the inner sense. "You see Piuty man singin' sometime, and cryin' when he sing," says Kern River Jim, "it ain't what he singin'

make him cry. It's what he thinkin' about when he sing make him cry."

I have always felt at liberty to put into my versions all that I could discover of what the singer was thinking about. In the song for the Passing of a Beautiful Woman I have tried not to ladyfy the thought, though there was a patent difficulty in getting it clearly expressed by the singer, who complained that though the original was not considered a bad song, all the "White man's words" available "mean bad." That means of course that our schools have never taught the Indian any words for love that have not the stamp of baseness. It was to be expected of a people who would undertake to insist that the Corn Dance should be danced in pajamas, lest Deity, to whom the dance is made, should not be able to endure the sight of the bronzed thighs and shoulders he has given to the least of his Americans.

§ 17

It can not escape the attention of the prosodist that I have nowhere touched upon the problem of accent. There are two reasons for such an omission, the first being that accent does not appear to have any place in Amerind poetry apart from the natural movements of thought, and the accents of the language in which the original occurs. When you consider that the fifty-eight linguistic groups of aboriginal American speech differ among themselves as much as the languages of Europe, and that only a few of their many dialectic variations have been recorded, you will readily see that no study of speech accents would have any weight in literary translations.



There are of course definite melodic accents which belong to the study of music, and do not seem to be carried over to verbal renderings by the Indians themselves. Nor have I, in all my experiments, been able to discover that the aboriginal derived any pleasure from metrical accent as we practise it. And of fundamental metrical accents, occurring in the major rhythms of the poetic dance, I would almost go so far as to say that there are none.

I am even inclined to insist that the temporal division of drum beats found in most recorded Amerind music is purely subjective, growing out of the inability of the sophisticated ear to hear without accent, and the necessity of notating aboriginal music in terms of which accent is an inescapable condition.

To account for my assurance on this point I must go back to the traditional pyrrhic meter of the archaic Greek period, in which the drum and foot beats are regularly spaced and unaccented, like stepping stones upon which the melody runs and leaps and pirouettes. This undifferentiated dub dub dub dub of the tombes which can be heard in the kivas of the Rio Grande Pueblos for days before the dance begins, is the most exhilarating sound in the world, and destroys at once the assumption that accent arises primarily in the effort of the listener to relieve the strain by setting up accents as points of rest. For this unaccented beat is so native to our inner selves that I have never heard even the most sophisticated complain of it; whereas the reiterated *One two three, One two three* of a modern drum, endured for so long would drive an ordinary person insane.

I do not say that examples of what might be called metrical accent may not yet be found in aboriginal dance, but the enormous preponderance of the unaccented beat forces us to conclude that it is not only older, but probably the oldest form of rhythm. Thus we are driven back on one or two assumptions. Either we are wrong in concluding that the compensating arrangement of one strong beat against two or three weak beats originates in man's right and left-handedness, or there was a time in his history when right and left-handedness had not yet been established as the prevailing mode. And this is precisely what seems to be the case.

Practically all authorities are agreed that the variability between dextrality and sinistrality increases as we go backward in the history of the race. Now comes M. Sarafin, the eminent French archeologist, to say that a study of Neolithic remains in Europe convinces him that up to the beginning of the bronze age, European man had equal, interchangeable use of both hands. This is excellent ground for supposing that European aboriginals expressed themselves in unaccented rhythms similar to those used by aboriginal man in America, the last vanishing echo of which down the Greek vista caught, and may as well retain, the name of *pyrrhic*.

This helps us to fix the origin of accent as a device for establishing temporal coincidences, in man's growing disposition toward compensating bilaterality. The center of gravity of the body, a little to the right of the median line, becomes the point toward which is established that necessity of poetic rhythm to return upon itself, which Miss Lowell has pointed out. This we shall have to take



up again in *The American Gesture*. It concerns our study of aboriginal rhythms only so far as it helps to define accent in poetry as a subjective attempt of the organism to handle series of undifferentiated stimuli, such as the *chuff chuff* of a steam engine, in terms of its own right and left-handedness. That the struggle is to establish balance is further shown by experiments recently undertaken in American laboratories, which indicate that even in the freest free verse there is a subjective disposition to set up temporal equivalence between a single strong and many weak syllables.

Evidently verse is never freed from man's struggle to come out even with himself . . . unless, of course, we are to accept some puzzling modern rhythms as the first attempt to record machine-handedness which may turn out to be as different from two-handedness as simple dextrality is from ambi-dextrality. Wherever man goes and *however*, the Muses must of necessity, come dancingly along beside him.

§ 18

I would unfairly conclude this record of my work if I omitted to return acknowledgments for the help I have had from the ethnological studies of such scholars as Fletcher and Densmore, Goddard and Boaz and Kroeber, Mathews and Cushing and Harrington. In admitting the contribution of their scholarship, I should fall short if I did not also acknowledge the generosity of their personal assistance in elucidating the creative process as it exhibits itself in the aboriginal mind.

Though they do not always take me so seriously as I take them, it would be unfair not to admit that they always take me good-humoredly. That I should make mistakes in a field where so little had been done before me was to have been expected.<sup>12</sup> That the only mistake I have ever had publicly to correct came of my trusting to the ethnologists too implicitly is my excuse for occasionally venturing beyond their findings on ground where nobody but a poet could have ventured at all.

Nor must I omit to say that I have frequently been made aware of my own poetic limitations. A better poet would have done better both by you and the Indian, but at the time most of this work was attempted, no better poet had offered. Practically all of this work had been done by 1910 and much of it published before 1914, about which time the free versifiers burst upon the world with loud cries of self-discovery. Both *Fire* and *The Arrow Maker* had been written, produced and published before there was any popular name by which to call the new form, and it is this priority of my experiment over much which has since captured the acclaim of critics which seems to justify this republication in collected form as part of the history of what has now proved to be a veridical American movement.



WEST VIRGINIA

Amerindian Songs

Reëxpressed from the Originals

by

Mary Austin



THE  
LIBRARY  
OF THE  
MUSEUM  
OF  
COMPARATIVE ZOOLOGY  
AT  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

## HEART'S FRIEND

Fair is the white star of twilight  
And the sky clearer  
At the day's end;  
But she is fairer,  
And she is dearer,  
She, my heart's friend!

Fair is the white star of twilight  
And the moon roving  
To the sky's end;  
But she is fairer,  
And she is dearer,  
She, my heart's friend!

From the Paiute.



## THE GRASS ON THE MOUNTAIN

Oh, long, long  
The snow has possessed the mountains.

The deer have come down and the big-horn,  
They have followed the Sun to the south  
To feed on the mesquite pods and the bunch grass.  
Loud are the thunder drums  
In the tents of the mountains.

Oh, long, long  
Have we eaten *chia* seeds  
And dried deer's flesh of the summer killing.  
We are wearied of our huts  
And the smoky smell of our garments.

We are sick with desire of the sun  
And the grass on the mountain.

From the Paiute.

SONG FOR THE PASSING OF A BEAUTIFUL  
WOMAN

Strong sun across the sod can make  
Such quickening as your countenance!

I am more worth for what your passing wakes,  
Great races in my loins, to you that cry.  
My blood is redder for your loveliness.

From the Paiute.



## SONG FOR THE NEWBORN

To be sung by the one who first takes the child from  
its mother.

Newborn, on the naked sand  
Nakedly lay it.  
Next to the earth mother,  
That it may know her;  
Having good thoughts of her, the food giver.

Newborn, we tenderly  
In our arms take it,  
Making good thoughts.  
House-god, be entreated,  
That it may grow from childhood to manhood,  
Happy, contented;  
Beautifully walking  
The trail to old age.  
Having good thoughts of the earth its mother,  
That she may give it the fruits of her being.  
Newborn, on the naked sand  
Nakedly lay it.

Grande Pueblos.

## WARRIOR'S SONG

Weep not for me, Loved Woman,  
Should I die;  
But for yourself be weeping!

Weep not for warriors who go  
Gladly to battle.  
Theirs to revenge  
Fallen and slain of our people;  
Theirs to lay low  
All our foes like them,  
Death to make, singing.

Weep not for warriors,  
But weep for women!  
Oh, weep for all women!

Theirs to be pitied  
Most of all creatures,  
Whose men return not!  
How shall their hearts be stayed  
When we are fallen?

Weep not for me, Loved Woman,  
For yourself alone be weeping!



## THE EAGLE'S SONG

Said the Eagle:

I was astonished  
When I heard that there was death.

My home, alas,  
Must I leave it!  
All beholding summits,  
Shall I see thee no more!

North I went,  
Leaning on the wind;  
Through the forest resounded  
The cry of the hunted doe.

East I went,  
Through the hot dawning;  
There was the smell of death in my nostrils.

South I went, seeking  
The place where there is no death.  
Weeping I heard  
The voice of women  
Wailing for their children.

West I went,  
On the world encompassing water;  
Death's trail was before me.

*The Eagle's Song*

75

People, O people,  
Needs be that we must die!

Therefore let us make  
Songs together.  
With a twine of songs to bind us  
To the middle Heaven,  
The white way of souls.  
There we shall be at rest,  
With our songs  
We shall roam no more!

Southern California.



## YOUNG MEN'S SONG

Ah—ahou! Ahou—aou! \*  
Hi! Hi! Hi! Hi-ah-ee—ah!

Go we now,  
Go we now,  
Go . . o . . o now!  
Ahou! Ahou! Ahou! Ahou!

Go we where the trail leads,  
It leads before us!

Ahou . . aou . . aou . . aou . . aou . . aou! †  
Ai . . ai . . ai . . ai . . ai . . ai!  
Go we  
Go we  
Go . . o . . o now!

Many scalps  
We shall bring returning.

Go we  
Ahou!  
Ahou!  
Hi! Hi! Hi!  
Ai . . ai . . ai . . ai . . ai . . ai . . i . . ee!

\* Call to attract the attention of War god.

† Prolong by clapping hand on mouth.

## WOMAN'S SONG

These are the First Born  
Of the First People.  
Topal, the grinding stone,  
Kenhut, the wampum string,  
Paviut, the knife.

When the Empty Quietness  
Begot the Engendering Mist,  
Then came the Sky Man,  
Came the Earth Mother,  
Who made the Grinding Stone,  
Who made the Hunting Knife,  
Who made the Wampum String.

Thus runs the song around,  
Under what tribal change soe'er you find them.  
Where there are women found  
There sits the grinding stone;  
Where there are men  
There glints the hunting knife;  
Where there are People  
There goes the wampum string.  
Thus runs the song around.

From the Luiseño.



## A SONG IN DEPRESSION

Now all my singing dreams are gone!  
None knows where they have fled  
Nor by what trails they have left me.

Return, O dreams of my heart,  
And sing in the summer twilight,  
By the creek and the almond thicket  
And the field that is bordered with lupines.

Now is my refuge to seek  
In the hollow of friendly shoulders,  
Since the singing is stopped in my pulse  
And the earth and the sky refuse me.  
Now must I hold by the eyes of a friend  
When the high white stars are unfriendly.

Over sweet is the refuge for trusting.  
Return and sing, O my Dreams,  
In the dewy and palpitant pastures,  
Till the love of living awakes  
And the strength of the hills to uphold me!

From the Washoe-Paiute.

## SIOUX SONG AT PARTING

Breaks now, breaks now my heart,  
Thinking, from thee I part.  
Hear thou what says my heart:  
Keep me,  
Keep me in thine alway!

Dreams now, dreams now my heart.  
Weeping, awake I start,  
Thinking, again we part.  
Dream thou,  
Perchance thy dream will stay!



## THE YIELDING HEART

Too soon I yield, I fear,  
Too soon!  
Yet yielding I rejoice  
That in your touch  
Such power should be,  
Such magic in your voice!

From the Yokut.

## COME NOT NEAR MY SONGS

Come not near my songs,  
You who are not my lover,  
Lest from out that ambush  
Leaps my heart upon you!

When my songs are glowing  
As an almond thicket  
With the bloom upon it,  
Lies my heart in ambush  
All amid my singing;  
Come not near my songs,  
You who are not my lover!

Do not hear my songs,  
You who are not my lover!  
Over-sweet the heart is,  
Where my love has bruised it,  
Breathe you not that fragrance,  
You who are not my lover.  
Do not stoop above my song,  
With its languor on you,  
Lest from out my singing  
Leaps my heart upon you!

From the Shoshone.



SONG OF THE BASKET DANCERS <sup>13</sup>

I

We, the Rain Cloud callers,  
Ancient mothers of the Rain Cloud clan,  
Basket bearers;  
We entreat you,  
O ye Ancients,  
By the full-shaped womb,  
That the lightning and the thunder and the rain  
Shall come upon the earth,  
Shall fructify the earth;  
That the great rain clouds shall come upon the earth  
As the lover to the maid.

II

Send your breath to blow the clouds,  
O ye Ancients,  
As the wind blows the plumes  
Of our eagle-feathered prayer sticks,  
Send, O ye Ancients,  
To the Six Corn Maidens.  
To the White Corn Maiden,  
To the Yellow Corn Maiden,  
To the Red Corn Maiden,

To the Blue Corn Maiden,  
To the Many Colored Maiden,  
To the Black Corn Maiden,  
That their wombs bear fruit.

III

Let the thunder be heard,  
O ye Ancients!  
Let the sky be covered with white blossom clouds,  
That the earth, O ye Ancients,  
Be covered with many colored flowers.  
That the seeds come up,  
That the stalks grow strong  
That the people have corn,  
That happily they eat.  
Let the people have corn to complete the road of life.



## LAMENT OF A MAN FOR HIS SON

Son, my son!

I will go up to the mountain  
And there I will light a fire  
To the feet of my son's spirit,  
And there will I lament him;  
Saying,  
O my son,  
What is my life to me, now you are departed!

Son, my son,  
In the deep earth  
We softly laid thee in a Chief's robe,  
In a warrior's gear.  
Surely there,  
In the spirit land  
Thy deeds attend thee!  
Surely,  
The corn comes to the ear again!

But I, here,  
I am the stalk that the seed-gatherers  
Descrying empty, afar, left standing.  
Son, my son!  
What is my life to me, now you are departed?

## MEDICINE SONGS

These are the songs of the Friend,  
Made by the Medicine Man  
In the young dusk of the Spring, moonless and tender.

At the hour when balm-giving herbs  
Begin to be musky and sweet along the creek border,  
When the smell of the sage is sharp in the trail of the  
cattle,  
And the ants run busily still up the boles of the pine  
trees,  
I heard the pound of his feet, and the roll of his ram's  
horn rattle.  
Sweet was the drone of his song,  
And the night desirous.

All night he sang,  
Till the young, thin moon came up,  
About the wolf hour of the morning.

The eyes of the Medicine Man  
Were pale as the sloughs at sun-dawn.  
The shadow of all his songs  
Strewed the cheek hollows  
Like ash in the pits of the hearthstone,  
Bitter and thick was his voice  
With the dust stirred up by his dancing.



These are the songs he made  
To be sung for endurance of friendship,  
Which still in my heart I hear  
When I go by the sweet-smelling trails  
In the moonless evenings of April.  
My pulse is full of their whisper and beat,  
Overfull and aching with song  
And the roll of the ram's horn rattle,  
When the smell of the camphire comes out by the creeks,  
And the nights are young and desirous.

## FIRST SONG

O winding trails that run out every way  
To seek the happy places of the hills,  
And stars that swirl about the hollow heaven,  
You hear the rising of my songs  
Like a morning full of wings.

O little trails, that whiten through the dunes,  
A light is on you more than day has made.  
And all my mind goes from me like a flame  
To couple with the live thought of the world,  
Because of this my friend.

## SECOND SONG

What is this that stirs beside me  
What sweet troubling?

It is my thought that quickens to my friend.  
For my thought was as a woman  
When her time is past and she bears no children.  
Now the time returns  
Tremulous and quick as my friend goes by me.

Now is my walking changed  
And my strength braced with laughter.  
I am so much more to myself  
As the friend of my friend,  
That the days shall not affront me,  
Nor sighs, little sisters of pain, come nigh me.

## THIRD SONG

Good is a maid in the hut  
In the undark nights in summer  
When her sides are slim and brown  
And you prove her by her laughter.  
But the love of man to man  
Has mighty works to prove it.

## FOURTH SONG

Lo, my heart is as a lair.  
It is hidden under my songs,  
And my dancing is a screen before its ways.

There my friend shall keep darkly,  
When ill repute pursues him  
There he shall lie safe  
From malice and dishonor.



## PAPAGO LOVE SONGS

### I

Early I rose  
In the blue morning;  
My love was up before me,  
It came running to me from the doorways of the Dawn.

On Papago Mountain  
The dying quarry  
Looked at me with my love's eyes.

### II

Do you long, my Maiden,  
For bisnaga blossoms  
To fasten in your hair?

I will pick them for you.  
What are bisnaga spines to me  
Whom love is forever pricking in the side?

## GLYPHS

### I

A girl wearing a green ribbon,—  
As if it had been my girl.  
—The green ribbon I gave her for remembrance—  
Knowing all the time it was not my girl,  
Such was the magic of that ribbon,  
Suddenly,  
My girl existed inside me!

### II

Your face is strange,  
And the smell of your garments,  
But your soul is familiar;  
As if in dreams our thoughts  
Had visited one another.

Often from unremembering sleep  
I wake delicately glowing.  
Now I know what my heart has been doing.

Now I know why when we met  
It slipped  
So easily into loving.



## III

Truly buzzards  
Around my sky are circling!

For my soul festers,  
And an odor of corruption  
Betrays me to disaster.

Meanness, betrayal and spite  
Come flockwise,  
To make me aware  
Of sickness and death within me.  
My sky is full of the dreadful sound  
Of the wings of unsuccesses.

From the Washoe-Paiute.

## NEITHER SPIRIT NOR BIRD

Neither spirit nor bird;  
That was my flute you heard  
Last night by the river.  
When you came with your wicker jar  
Where the river drags the willows,  
That was my flute you heard,  
Wacoba, Wacoba,  
Calling, Come to the willows!

Neither the wind nor a bird  
Rustled the lupine blooms.  
That was my blood you heard  
Answer your garment's hem  
Whispering through the grasses;  
That was my blood you heard  
By the wild rose under the willows.

That was no beast that stirred,  
That was my heart you heard,  
Pacing to and fro  
In the ambush of my desire,  
To the music my flute let fall.  
Wacoba, Wacoba,  
That was my heart you heard  
Leaping under the willows.

From the Shoshone.



RAIN SONGS FROM THE RIO GRANDE  
PUEBLOS <sup>14</sup>

I

People of the middle heaven  
Moving happily behind white floating cloud masks,  
Moving busily behind rain-straitened cloud masks;  
People of the Lightning,  
People of the Thunder,  
People of the Rainbow,  
Rain! Rain! Rain!

II

Cloud priests,  
Whose hearts ascend through the spruce tree  
On the Mountains of the North,

Pray for us!

Cloud priests,  
Whose hearts ascend  
Through the pine of the West,  
Through the oak of the South,  
Through the aspen of the East,  
Through the high-branched cedar of the zenith,  
Through the low, dark cedar of the nadir,

Pray for us!

III

Archpriests of the six world quarters,  
    Work with us!  
That the waters of the six great springs of the world  
May fructify the Earth, our mother,  
That she bring forth fruit for us!

We, the ancient ones,  
From the four womb-worlds,  
From the doorway of the underworld,  
From Shipapu,  
We, assembling,  
Lifting up our thoughts to the clouds,  
To the lightning, to the thunder,  
Lifting up our hearts,  
Make you precious medicine.

People of the Middle World,  
Send your thoughts to us!  
That our songs go straightly  
On the sacred meal road,  
The ancient road,  
Walking it with power.  
Send your thoughts to us!

Send to the cloud priests,  
Send to the archpriests;  
That their songs may bring the waters  
To fructify the Earth;  
That the Sun embrace the Earth  
That she bring forth fruit.



IV

People of the lightning,  
Send your serpent darting arrows!  
Hear the thunder beating  
With its wings of dark cloud!

Who is this that cometh?  
People of the trees on the six world mountains,  
Standing up to pray for rain,  
All your people and your thoughts  
Come to us!

Who is this that cometh?  
People of the dark cloud,  
Let your thoughts come to us!  
People of the lightning,  
Let your thoughts come to us!  
People of the blue-cloud horizon,  
Let your thoughts come to us!  
Rain! Rain! Rain!

## SONGS OF THE SEASONS <sup>15</sup>

### I

All these I have mentioned  
    With Wawanut;  
I have mentioned all the seasons and the stars  
    To Wawanut.

All the little steadfast stars  
And the Walkers of the Night,  
Where the flying light of sun is caught and hidden,  
I have named them to Wawanut.

I have named the Thunder,  
With his moccasins of dark cloud  
Walking on the mountain.  
I have named the Tovukmal,  
The clean March water  
Washing down the last year's leaves.  
And the little silver rains,  
The many footed rains  
Dancing with the meadowlarks  
Round the roots of the rainbow.

### II

I have named the Pahoyomal  
    With Wawanut,



Now the ant has her hill and her house,  
The spider opens her door, dew shining;  
White butterflies emerging  
In their spotted robes  
From their sacred dance enclosure.  
The wind tosses  
The white blossom cones of the chamise,  
And the sea's white foam flowers.

Now the sky is ashamed  
Of what he did to the maiden summer;  
Retreating afar and on high  
He tugs at the four world quarters.

The elk brings forth in the north,  
The wild sheep at Temucula,  
The horned lizard on the hot sands  
Around Turtle Rock  
With his young is dancing.

All these I have mentioned in my songs.  
I have made a twine of songs  
To bind them to Wawanut.

## III

I have named the summer  
To Wawanut.  
I have mentioned earth's contented noises.

I have named the Star Chief, Kukilish  
And the lovely Light-Left-Over-from-the-Evening-to-the-  
Morning.\*

I have named the ripe wild oats  
Moon white on the sea-fronting ranges.  
Arrows twanging in the white oak browse,  
Women stripping deer meat,  
All these I have mentioned to Wawanut,  
Women winnowing *chia*.

I have made them songs.  
With a net of songs I bind them  
    To Wawanut.  
On the silver-glimmer path  
My songs are walking  
    With Wawanut.

I am proud of my songs,  
I have believed my songs.  
I have made the seasons and the stars  
Work together with Wawanut.

\* The planet Venus.



## PRAYER TO THE MOUNTAIN SPIRIT

Young Man, Chieftain,  
Reared within the Mountain,  
Lord of the Mountain,  
Hear a young man's prayer!

Hear a prayer for cleanness  
Keeper of the *he* rain,  
Drumming on the mountain,  
Lord of the *she* rain  
That restores the earth in newness;  
Keeper of the clean rain,  
Hear a prayer for wholeness!

Young man, Chieftain,  
Hear a prayer for fleetness,  
Keeper of the deer's way,  
Reared among the eagles,  
Clear my feet of slothness!  
Keeper of the Paths of Men,  
Hear a prayer for straightness!

Hear a prayer for courage!  
Keeper of the lightning,  
Reared amid the thunder,

*Prayer to the Mountain Spirit* 99

Keeper of the dark cloud  
At the doorway of the morning,  
Hear a prayer for staunchness.

Young man, Chieftain,  
Spirit of the Mountain!



## SONG OF THE MATELESS WOMAN

This is my song that I make,  
A song for all women  
For whom light hands have lit love  
A ruining fire in the grasslands,  
Strewing its pleasant ways with ash,  
And charred sticks of remembrance.

Thus do the mateless women,  
Binding their hearts with song,  
Lest the gods hear them aching;  
Moving on wounded wing  
Between their love and the gods,  
Lest by the trail of their bleeding hearts  
Furies should track the Beloved.

With what cry shall I cry to the gods,  
Now my power has departed?

It has gone from me clutching at love,  
As the shadow clutching the feet of light  
Goes from the mountain.

As the wild geese at the end of rains  
Go northward,  
As the tang from a wet bow-string,

*Song of the Mateless Woman* 101

So is my power gone from me!  
How shall I win it again  
Who cannot win the love of a man?

With what cry shall I cry,  
When my heart is emptied of all  
But the grief of women?

All the anguish of women,  
It smells to the gods  
As the dead after battle.  
It sounds in my heart  
As the hollow drums,  
Calling to battle!

I shall bind up all my pangs  
As arrows,  
In the sheath of my loneliness.  
Keen be they as my sorrows!

Return to me, O my Power!  
It is I that call,  
The Medicine Woman,  
Childless, unmated—

Nay, I shall mate with the gods,  
And the tribesmen shall be my children!

Rise up in me, O my Power,  
As the wings of eagles!



*Song of the Mateless Woman*

Return on me as the rain,  
The earth renewing.  
Refresh the springs of my soul  
By the path of hidden waters.  
Be to me, O my Power,  
As the lightning  
Out of the fringes of dark cloud  
Renewing the harvest.  
Make my heart fruitful  
To nourish my children.

This is my song that I make,  
The song of the mateless woman!  
None holdeth my hand  
But the Friend-of-the-soul-of-man.

We shall beget great deeds between us!

## BLACK PRAYERS

There is a woman  
Has taken my man from me.

How was I to know,  
When I gave him my soul to drink  
In the moon of Corn Planting,  
When the leaves of the oak  
Are furred like a mouse's ear,  
And the moon curls like a prayer plume  
In the green streak over Tyuonyi.

When I poured my soul to his  
In the midst of my body's trembling,  
How was I to know  
That the soul of a woman was no more to him  
Than sweet sap dripping  
From a bough wind-broken?

If I had known  
I could have kept my soul from him,  
Even though I kept not my body.

That woman, with her side-looking eyes.  
Whatever she takes from him,  
It is my soul she is taking.



*Black Prayers*

Waking sharply at night  
I can feel my life pulled from me,  
Like water in an unbaked olla.  
Then I know he is with her,  
She is drinking from his lips  
The soul I gave him.

Therefore I make black prayers for her  
With this raven's feather,  
With owl feathers edged with silence,  
That all her days may be night haunted;  
Let blackness come upon her  
The Downward road  
Toward Sippapu,  
Let her walk in the shadow of silence.

Would I had kept my soul  
Though I gave my body.  
Better the sly laugh and the pointed finger  
Than this perpetual gnawing of my soul  
By a light woman.

Now I know why these witches are so fair,  
They are fed on the hearts of better women.  
Who would not take another's man,  
Knowing there is no untying  
The knot of free-given affection.

Let darkness come upon her.  
Let her feet stumble  
Into the Black Lake of Tears.

Let her soul drown.  
Let Those Above not hear her.  
By the black raven's plume  
By the owl's feather.



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Songs in the American Manner





## A PREFACE FOR A BOOK

This is the house of my heart.  
The unlatched casement  
Swings to the street  
And clacks to the wind's advertisement.  
Wanton the house is become  
To the eyes of the neighbors.

Rare are the rooms within.  
The windows  
Look on the wood and the sea  
And the lifting surf, seven-colored.  
Sweet are the airs of the house,  
Mixed of the sea and the sun-steeped roses;  
Sweet and secret the halls  
And morning haunted the chambers.

But ever the Lord of the house  
Lingers abroad and afar;  
And ever the unlatched casement  
And the door aswing on its hinges,  
Let in the envious stranger,  
Desiring the pictured walls  
And the seaward-looking windows.  
Ever the lit hearth leaps  
And the shadow fire in the twilight



Beckon the Lord of the house  
With the ache of an empty dwelling.

Would he might come to his house  
And shut up the clacking casement!

## SONG OF THE MAVERICK

I am too arid for tears, and for laughter  
Too sore with unslaked desires.  
My nights are scanty of sleep  
And my sleep too full of dreaming;  
The frosts are not cold enough  
Nor the suns sufficiently burning:  
The hollow waves are slack  
And no wind from any quarter  
Lifts strongly enough to outwear me.  
My body is bitter with baffled lusts  
Of work and love and endurance.  
As a maverick, leaderless, lost from the herd,  
Loweth my soul with the need of man encounters.

For I am crammed and replete  
With the power of desolate places;  
I have gone far on faint trails  
And slept in the shade of my arrows;  
Patience, forgiveness and might  
Ache in me, finding no egress,  
And virtues stale that are too big for the out gate.

I would run large with the man herd, the hill subduers,  
I would impress myself on the mold of large adventure  
Until all deeds of that likeness  
Should a long time carry  
The stripe of the firstling's father.



*Song of the Maverick*

For I am anguished with strength,  
Overfed with the common experience,  
My feet run wide of the rutted trails  
Toward the undared destinies.

## THE MUCH DESIRED

I have heard a voice awake in the dawn dim valleys,  
A shout from the rearing hills hand-fast under the  
    headlands,  
Where the wild sheep are,  
And the trails are hid by the heather;  
Whose hands are under the earth for the travail of the  
    harvests.  
For I have lain on the hills and the strong wind hath  
    covered me,  
I have seen the Much Desired, white as wheat in Sep-  
    tember.

You that hark for the sea in a shell, hollow and pearled  
    and precious,  
He is here by the surf that rings the brown foreshore  
    with thunder!  
He has left the dropping shrines for the altar lift of the  
    mesas!  
Far are His feet in the dew from the man infested places.

Not in the old, old house whose props were flawed in the  
    casting;  
Not with the old, old sword, crumpled and dulled at the  
    edges!  
Strained little souls that creep to bedizened, ancient  
    altars,



I heard Him pass in the wind  
The sea blue lilacs bent under;  
Who knows but for you He will stop and cover your lack  
with His garments!

Who cares whither the King has gone, whom He has  
blessed in parting?  
I have seen wings astir that left the heavens tender,  
And I am hushed with happiness  
And I am dumb with wonder,  
You shall know me where I go by the smell of the  
meadows,  
The scent of the broken scrub and the yerba buena  
I have been breaking trail for the Much Desired!

## YOU THAT GO BY IN THE STREET

Sisters, my sisters,  
You that go by in the street,  
Seeking the starry adventure,  
Is it the hour or the man,  
Is it love you seek or the lover?

Flithering moths of the bright barred night,  
Scarred at Love's mighty candle,  
Strange I should know so well  
What the lit street provides you!  
Snatched from the gulf for an hour  
By a dear bought preciousness,  
Turning your cheek on a transient breast  
For the ease of an aching remembrance.

Sisters, my sisters.  
Between my bed and the wall,  
In the void of my aching,  
I am aware of a winding stair  
Love by light love leading down,  
Each one lighter than each  
To the guttered slime of the roadway.  
That way great Love went down,  
After the use of the street,  
Not looking backward.  
Sisters, my sisters,  
The mark of the street between my breasts,  
Will it grow white with weeping?



## UNWORTHY LOVE

How is it with my heart  
Since I can love thee?  
Flawed in the casting,  
So that thy soul  
When I strike it with nobleness  
Rings no tone truly.

Yet, at that flattened note  
The soul of every sense  
Shouldering each on each  
Runs and looks out of the windows  
While deep in the house of Life  
Age-long, unimagined instincts  
Bay at the voice of the master.

## WOMAN

When woman lay in the womb of the world,  
Ere the heart of the world was divided,  
Before there was faith or forsaking,  
They heard what the high gods said,  
Making, unmaking.

Heard it small and apart, as a spider  
Dropped from her gossamer thread  
Heareth far overhead  
The talk of the forest.

Darkly as pines that confer,  
Their high tops bowed together  
In the Wills that blow between the worlds,  
Fingering the Wills for the thread that binds  
The upper world and the nether;—  
The will of each to each in its kind,  
And the will of all to Oneness.

“Lo,” said the makers of men,  
Ere man was molded,  
Sitting under the Wills as in dreams men should see them  
Shaping our eldern earth under an Ash tree,  
“Sow we the Word unto Life as the linden  
Scatters her summer winged seeds to the windy spaces,



Even so as it falls, we shall take counsel together  
For the sake of man that we make, lest the Wills rend  
him

Eyeless, untiring, rotting, reforming—  
Binding him fast unto Life, we shall fend him  
With the will of each unto each in his kind,  
And the will of all to Oneness."

Then the Word went glinting forth,  
As between the sun and the dawning  
The silken fleets of the milkweed  
Sail in the windless air above the marshes;  
In the days when the Man within man  
Stood up from the Beast his brother.  
And suddenly Life was stirred.  
As the prows in the harbor  
Move all at once and together  
When the land wind begins,  
And deeper than surf or tide  
The sea dreams of adventure.

Up leaped the doe from the fern  
When the buck belled her,  
Leaving the uncropped scrub and the bindweed blossom,  
Following nose on flank, dappled and antlered;  
Afar at her killing, the Voice of the lonely land  
Answered the roar of her lord in the hot blue dawning;  
Mellowly out of his thicket whistled the hermit thrush,  
And "*True true true*" moaned the doves by the water  
courses.

Small and afar, as a spider climbs to the sun,  
The woman climbed up to life by the thread from her  
body spun,  
And she marked through the leaf and bloom of life  
How the changing patterns run  
In the Wills that blow across the world  
As the wind across the wheat,  
And the opal bubbles of love frothed up  
And broke in slime at her feet.  
But she braved the rending forces,  
And she dared the Wills to meet,  
For the Word was in her bosom,  
Ere ever life begun,  
The will of each to each in its kind  
And the will of us all to One.



## THE WOUND THAT BLED IN HEAVEN

There was a man of Nazareth  
Whose wounds ached in Heaven.  
Under the tree whose leaves  
Floating from noon to noon of the centuries  
Marked out a day of the Lord,  
Where the Seraphim  
Dipped their bright wings in the river,  
Lo, in his pierced hands,  
He was aware of a pang,  
And the track of a spear in his side  
Reddened and throbbing.

Straightway forth from the gate  
He followed the ache in his breast, as a homing pigeon  
Follows the secret clue to the cote that bred him;  
Marked by none but the angels  
Tossing their moon-bright spheres in the windless spaces,  
Leaving them poised in the void while they wondered,  
Touched with awe of his manhood,  
With a faint celestial envy  
Of his strange, great gift of sorrow  
And the wound that bled in Heaven.

Not at all men marked him  
As he went in his earlier guise of a race rejected,  
With sweated brows

*The Wound That Bled in Heaven* 121

And palms that the adze had calloused.  
But for all their common stripe,  
It was not the Workers stayed him.

In the cry of yoke-galled people,  
Said the man of Nazareth,  
There is nothing new or strange to set my side bleeding.  
It is not my yoke that they bear, nor my burden.  
It was neither blood nor sweat that bowed me,  
But the burden of strength  
And the yoke of rebellion.  
I was not all for pity, even on earth,  
Said the man of Nazareth.

Loud in Heaven, he said to his own,  
In the rent paid pews where he found them,  
Is the cry of the young, defrauded  
Of the beast's right to the sun  
And the well fed stature.  
The tears of soul blind children  
Scald the wound in my side,  
Said the man of Nazareth.  
Lord, said his own, with a fine Christian courtesy,—  
Noting the marks of his trade with eyes averted,—  
In the building of States  
There must needs be some tools broken,  
Children put too soon to the wheel,  
In the rash way of the poor.  
Lord, you have seen it,  
When of your great condescension



122 *The Wound That Bled in Heaven*

You came to the scum of the earth  
From your high, exclusive Heaven.  
The poor have not greatly changed, O Lord,  
Since you knew them.

Yea, said the man of Nazareth.  
It is for this my wounds bleed  
Even in Heaven.

### WHENCE?

I do not know who sings my songs  
Before they are sung by me.

For my mind is an ordered house  
Where never a song should be;  
And the world is the sort of a place  
That my inquiring spirit grieves.  
Yet when my thoughts are seated round  
With their eyes upon the ground,  
The little songs come flimmering  
Like swallows round the eaves.

And when my life is as dry as a gourd,  
My heart the pebble, rattled by despair,  
Shaken at the funeral  
Of all the gods that were,  
I stretch my thoughts in the empty room—  
And suddenly my songs are there.



## YOUNG LOVE REMEMBERED

Young, oh, young!  
And yet stronger than the years.  
There was never breast but yours  
That could prop the ache in mine,  
Save the hollow of your shoulder  
Is no comfort for my tears.  
Strange that love so short and hurried  
For so long should wake and cry,  
And the dreams come back unburied,  
For not one of them will die.

## EBIA, MOTHER OF MEN

*Ebia, mother of men.*

*From the door of her cave delivering judgment.*

Say unto man, my son, that he wakes me;  
I that have slumbered so long in the breasts of all women.  
Now is my dreaming pierced with the noise of his beast-  
hood,  
Spitting his teeth through the long black tubes  
Into his brother's vitals;  
Where with the steel forged hand he rendeth his fellows  
Till the slayer lies down on the slain  
In the red wallows.

Thus of old in their rages  
Drummed the great males on their breasts in the dew-  
chilled dawning  
When sick with fear of the beast, I put the beast habit  
from off me;  
Clasping my son in my arms  
Through the forest I fled uprightly.  
Yea, I am shaken in sleep with the ancient terrors  
Or ever the tribes were named or the man-thought fash-  
ioned,  
When the hand that he clasped in mine  
As the viewless fear pursued us  
Was the first that he took from the ground,  
Learning to go uprightly.



Soft have I slumbered here in the breasts of women,  
Under the summer-shed bloom of womanly graces,  
Virtues thick on my head as the leaves of the forest,  
Feeding the fruit of the race in the sky-spread branches.  
Say unto man, my son, have a care how he wakes me;  
Lest I arise again in the breasts of all women,  
Lest I take my son by the hand  
And teach him to go uprightly.

## FIFTH AVENUE AT NIGHT

Long undulating lines of light  
Picked at like harpstrings  
By the steel-fingered rain.  
Slivers of steel,  
White sparks of steel struck off  
By impact with the pavement,  
Glancing *plop!*  
Into mirror surfaced pools,  
Thin, black puddles of steel  
Damascened with gold of glinting lights.

High on either side  
Many-windowed façades,  
Honeycombed with light.  
Half drained of honey  
By the rain-sleeked swarms of umbrellas  
Darting to cover in subterranean passages,  
Leaving the honeyed windows gaping blank  
At slithering lines of automobiles,  
Black beetle shining,  
Each with its one red light  
Like the red heart of hurry.

The rain-disheveled lamps  
Squatter past the cathedral,



Down Murray Hill  
They troop blinking,  
To see what the busses are about  
Under the arch there,  
At the foot of the avenue.

Grasshopper-green busses  
Peering at one another  
With great goggle lamps of eyes;  
Circling and twittering with their heads together,  
Scurrying north on inexplicable errands,  
Stopping and starting convulsively  
Pricked by slivers of rain.

The myriad-windowed façades  
Relax behind their veils of rain.  
The tension of their angles is loosened by the darkness,  
Between flickers of the light they yawn  
Like dowagers in the dark intervals of Opera  
Dropping their wattles above necklaces of light,  
While the orchestral rain tightens its strings  
And tunes them to the wind.

Behind them all the high-piled plunder,  
The inchoate magpie hordes  
Of Tiffany and Magobgob  
Are visiting one another.  
Egyptian trinkets torn from Pharaoh's tombs  
Are exchanging reminiscences  
With tinsel from Debrosses street.

## I DO NOT KNOW

I do not know if there is God,  
The center of this whirling orb  
Making and unmaking.

I do not know if there is God—  
But there's a Spirit in the wood.

That was it where once the lupine stirred.  
And there it laughed  
Between two gurgles of the brook and made  
Warm silence and the windless stir  
Along my sides where once was fur,  
And nameless, fierce temptations in my blood.

Or when the dawn is like a trumpet laid  
To the sea's lips that are curved keen for it,  
When the wet beach is gleaming like a shell,  
And all the foreshore whispers in green fire,  
I have felt that Spirit pass,  
Stalking the young winds in the grass.

I do not know if there is God—

But when my travail came  
And every sense went weltering blind



'Round jagged rocks of pain,  
There was a swimmer in the surf  
Rode with us down the staggering gulf  
And brought us safe to land.

. . . The hurrying hearse whisked out of sight,  
The sexton cleaned his spade on the grass,  
(My grief was stiff like the slithering clay)  
And the mourners put up their veils. . . .  
There was a Spirit blew  
The graveyard dust in my face.

"Earth unto earth was said of *you*.  
For something of you has gone into the ground  
With the child that you made at your body's cost.  
And a sea-blue lilac cannot toss,  
Nor the white corn tassel, row on row,  
But something of you has entered there.  
The brown corn silk is the brown of her hair,  
And the pink of her mouth you will find again  
Delicately folded lip on lip, in the budding tips  
Of the apricot boughs.  
For nothing can ever divide you now  
From the earth you have made with your dead."

That was a thing  
Only a Spirit could have said.

## NEW MEXICAN LOVE SONG

The long last lights on the mesas fail,  
And the coo doves cease,  
And the twittering quail  
The young wind walks in the tasseling corn  
Ohé!

But there's never the fall of your foot in the trail  
And the twilight hour is long,  
Beloved,  
Ohé!

The twilight hour is long!

The moon comes over the cañon wall  
The tombes wake,  
And the slim flutes call,  
And the dew drips down the tasseling corn,  
Ohé!

But there's never the sound of your voice at all  
And the twilight hour is long,  
Beloved,  
Ohé!

The twilight hour is long!



## DREAM

You should have weighted my dream of you  
With a leaden reality,  
Then it would have gone down  
Like some shotted mariner  
Stark in his canvas,  
Leaving the following seas  
All open to the stars!

Being only a dream,  
There's never a wave  
Lifting from blue to chrysoprase,  
Never an opal shine on the wet beaches,  
Nor auklet shattering  
The twilight's pure obsidian.  
Never a swift wing flash of beauty anywhere  
But my dream of you is there.

ON HEARING VACHEL LINDSAY CHANT HIS  
VERSE

I have remembered whence I came. . . .

Sleek, silt-charged rivers,  
Fat loam, slow yielding to the share,  
Slithering yellow clay,  
Tenacious as the heavy farmer stuff  
Cold on the withers of your stallion fancy, Lindsay.

I remember the lush bottoms,  
The basson blare of the trumpet creepers,  
The glassy air  
Shattered by insect glitter.  
Slow-moving summer creeks  
Laced in light rings  
By obscene water moccasins;  
And straight as a wound bleeding inwardly,  
The red streak of the cardinal.

I remember the towns,  
Slab-sided, smug,  
Impounding Pegasus among the cockleburrs;  
The slab-sided men, my forebears,  
Bearded like prophets,  
But setting a clean-shaven upper lip  
Against prophesying in the name of any God but theirs.



134      *On Hearing Vachel Lindsay*

Songs I remember. . . .  
"Tenting To-night," and "Nicodemus"  
Haunting my childhood like gray gulls  
Blown inland from deep-sea commotion,  
Sung by deep-breasted women,  
Large-armed for the cradling of States.  
And like a child's dream of a star,  
High on a heaven-whitened hill  
Old John Brown and his seven sons  
Making with God a majority.

Witchfires, outside the window, in the cold twilight,  
The beckoning dance, fragmentary, of Old-World Wonder,  
And that dim shouter in the offing of my mind,  
(You, Lindsay, on your stallion fancy?)

All these I have remembered,  
As a man wearing the king's tinsel,  
Suddenly sees in the throng gathered to celebrate him,  
Strong peasant faces,  
Knowing, at once and past any shaming,  
How he has climbed by their sinews,  
Throws his cockade to the king's lackeys, and declares  
There, there alone, are my kinsmen!

## GOING WEST

Some day I shall go West,  
Having won all time to love it in, at last  
Too still to boast.

But when I smell the sage,  
When the long, marching landscape line  
Melts into wreathing mountains,  
And the dust cones dance,  
Something in me that is of them will stir.

Happy if I come home  
When the musk-scented, moon-white gillia blows,  
When all the hills are blue, remembering  
The sea from which they rose.  
Happy again,  
When blunt-faced bees carouse  
In the red flagons of the incense shrub,  
Or apricots have lacquered boughs,  
And trails are dim with rain!

Lay me where some contented oak can prove  
How much of me is nurture for a tree;  
Sage thoughts of mine  
Be acorn clusters for the deer to browse.  
My loving whimsies—will you chide again  
When they come up as lantern flowers?



I shall be small and happy as the grass,  
Proud if my tip  
Stays the white, webby moons the spider weaves,  
Or down my bleaching stalks shall slip  
The light, imprisoning dew.  
Where once you trod.  
I shall be bluets in the April sod.

Or if the wheel should turn too fast,  
Run up and rest  
As a sequoia for a thousand years!

## CLINGING VINES

### WOODBINE

He was a tree whose winged seeds  
Should have reforested our barren acres;  
She was the vine that found him.

Lovely she bound  
Boughs that the four wind-rivers shaped.  
That's a vine's nature!  
It was our folly praised  
Her banners bright against the frost  
On tips whose deep, root-driven sap  
Made all his seasons spring.

Woodbine was meant to mask hewn rafters  
With leafage of reward.  
He was a tree. . . .  
Earth's immemorial flourish to the light.

Oh, she knew his worth!  
Her love was like a flag,  
Love red, to show how high he stood  
Against the sky and sun,  
Wreathed, celebrated;  
At last no sun could reach him.  
There he stands!  
Heart rotted in her clasp.



And still, she has her pride.  
All that flame-colored autumn show,  
That's her fine loyalty,  
Never to let us know  
'Tis she that keeps him standing.

## WILD CUCUMBER

Here on our lower mesa there's a vine  
Called megharizza,  
Comes from a strong, man-shaped root.

The first of our Spring rains  
Brings its translucent, pulsing shoots  
All silvery pubescent,  
Like lad's love,  
Every tip alert  
As to the glance of some bright girl.

Warm, growing days they move  
Clockwise to slightest intimations of support,  
Your body, or the nearest cañon wall,  
That fish-hook cactus,  
Taken with the happy confidence  
Of an unhidden child.

She was like that!  
No matter what she leaned on  
She had some tendrils feeling toward the sun.  
If in you she found  
Vantage for her next reach,  
You were by so much honored.

Women never understood her!  
Women think loving must have consequences.  
Children, or, at least  
Serve as the overture  
To notable achievement.  
Love was the mode of her existence.

'Tis true she grew . . . exuberant.

Those coarsely yellowing leaves  
Strung from the splay-footed oak,  
That papery, prickling pod  
You rattled with your foot . . .  
Wild Cucumber, not fit for food!

Still, I think the oak was happier  
For those pale green, star-pointed panicles;  
They smell of earth, you notice,  
Moist earth on the first nights of Spring,  
And the strong, man-shaped root. . . .  
But women seldom understand!



## FIG LEAVES

The poet Sterling once  
Said of a mayfly book,  
Glinting across the wind-sown field of print,  
"It has no guts."  
And with male squeamishness, apologized,  
Not knowing  
That women who have felt beneath their breath  
The announcing drumbeat of a life beginning,  
Have not man's need of fig-leaf phrases.

At any rate he needn't have apologized to me  
Who had seen the Red Man dancing  
To sustain the World Throb penned  
Alive between his ribs,  
Not like a ballerina's, in her toes,  
But next to where his life is;  
Heart, breath and bowels of him, moved  
With the desire to make the world work well with God,  
Or the proud consciousness  
Of having made a woman know him for a man,  
Till the laced muscles eased him into sound,  
And all his thought, filmed into words,  
Rose like linked bubbles in a rain-fed spring,  
And song became  
A symbol that fulfilled itself.

No guts. . . .

Perhaps that's why we have no poets now  
Can grip the people with creative pain;  
But star cold music such as Sterling makes,  
Or the free versifier's choice, eviscerated phrases,  
Or braying of maimed voices,  
Hybrids of art and sociology,  
Blaming the world and us for their lost potency.  
Dante and Homer and Isaiah came  
When the effective motions of man's mind,  
Courage, remorse, compassion,  
Lived each in its vital organ,  
Where the Kingdom of God is, in the midst of us.  
What else is music but the pang,—  
Wrung from the entrails of some poor, dead beastie,—  
By which the outgoing sense of things  
Catches you in the midrif?

God, when He first began to make Him creatures,  
Fashioned them of guts.  
A little pulse, a little pouch for food,  
A film between them and the Universe.  
Brain, motion, and the serviceable hand,  
So many figures of the dance  
Of the red-gutted microcosms,  
Throbbing to rhythms long rehearsed,—  
The soul—a song our viscera makes to God.



## WOMEN'S WAR THOUGHTS

*A room in Time from which a window looks on the Present.*

THE TRUMPETS:

Wake, O Women!

A WOMAN AT THE WINDOW:

Oh, no more for women  
Shall the trumpets tear their throats!

No more the white riders,  
Strong thewed and breastless  
Come reiving and raiding.  
We modern women  
Are undone by our own preciousness.  
Like viols of few strings  
Plucked at by lovers in their silken intervals,  
Live in the prelude to our womanness.  
Our music seldom swings  
From the appassionata's opening phrases  
Into the star-built theme of mastery.

Not even like the Spartan women,  
Guardians of the Gate whereby life, entering, is made  
man

By virtue of that clean divinity  
That lives in women's flesh.

Not ours to turn,  
Whose sons return not  
Borne on their shields or bearing them,  
To rear a sterner offspring to our conquerors.

*Trumpets sound, and summoning drums.*

Our sons are too much ours!  
Too much the child, that means,  
Too prone to keep us  
The condoning lap, the leaned on bosom,  
The ever pleased spectator of their plays  
Filling the gaps with ready make believe.

We talk of giving,  
Who cannot throb to world adventure  
Save through the still unsevered stalk of being;  
Who suffer, deep in the womb of our affection,  
Perpetual pangs of parturition.

Suddenly the drums  
Quicken the male pulse of the world,  
The questing trumpets  
Seek out the part of them that is not us,  
And with a sword  
Time heals us of a too prolonged maternity.

*Flags go by, and the tips of bayonets, passing  
the window in full procession.*

Strange they should look so much alike!

I cannot find my son's  
Among the lean brown shanks,  
Crossing and uncrossing like the shears of Atropos  
To cut the thread of over-ripe autocracy.



Nor trace the alien strains  
Gave rise to that steel-glinting river,  
Frothed bright with banners.

What tongues do trumpets speak,  
Welding all men into one moving unit?

Women are welded at heart  
By the rhythm of rocking cradles.  
World-wide, they are starting awake to feel if one is  
well covered,  
Who at that moment may be lying stark in the  
trenches.

Women of any nation,  
For the sake of a long sheared curl  
Between two leaves of a prayer book,  
Will weep on each other's shoulders.

But the word of the trumpet to men  
Is the seed of a forthright intention.

*The drums go by, and the Allied banners.*

When I was young, my son,  
I dreamed of a life exempted as yours is to-day,  
From the claims of the past and the present,  
A tiny, two-penny candle to burn on the altar of Now.

But the cant of a world made sleek by soul-stroking  
phrases,  
Offered your life for mine.  
As though your life were a thing I could make  
For my soul's diversion,

To dangle before my mind  
And quiet its hunger.  
Oh, my son, how times like these give the lie  
To that smug maternal illusion!

VOICES OF YOUNG SOLDIERS (*singing*):

*Land, my Land!*  
*Thy sons are going*  
*Where like a wind from the west we feel God blowing*  
*Kings from their seats and Empire from its stays.*  
*Land where the Vision blessed our fathers,*  
*Perfect in us thy praise!*

THE WOMAN (*repeating the word of the inner Voice*):

. . . You are no more to the making  
Than the nozzle is to the fountain.  
I am the source and the stream  
And the deeps to which I have called him.  
I will drink up the life of your son  
To quicken my harvest.  
I will take up his life and lay it  
To the lips of my larger purpose,  
Trumpeting forth my power,  
And my will to Freedom . . .

YOUNG SOLDIERS (*singing*):

*Land, my Land!*  
*Thy sons go singing*  
*Forth to the work of our God, our lives free flinging*  
*Nothing withholden or scamped, for thy sake;*  
*Land, by whose voice the larger Freedom*  
*Has called the world awake!*



THE WOMAN (*muses*):

Life that passed through us,  
Did it leave no tang of the man strain, mordant, unruly . . .

*The Red Cross nurses go by.*

Yonder the barren women . . .  
Women whose breasts are scarcely grown  
But whose hearts are steadied with skill,  
Will sit on the Pit's red edge  
And hold back death with laughter.

Bite back the moan in your throat, O my son,  
If the shrapnel tears you.  
Lest the unwed women say  
I was too woman-soft when I shaped you,  
I that am left to hand-waving, balcony service!

*The music grows faint in the distance.*

Why should we weep  
Who taught them to follow the music;  
We who attuned them  
To feints, pursuits, and surprises?  
Have we ever denied them the game that we should  
wonder  
When they go roaring forth to hunt one another?

Blood . . .

There is no virtue in blood . . .  
Any woman will tell you!

Torn flesh . . . and a gay endurance . . .  
I did as much for you in the bearing.

War is a sickness sucked from your shiny, toy maleness.

When your teeth have met on hard metal awhile  
You will be cured of your sickness.

And then, . . .

We will go back to our playing,  
Sally, retreat, and ambush, handling and stroking,  
Till Peace is choked with the rising scum  
Of our passionate prepossessions.

Was it you or I, son,  
Made this war, I wonder!



THE END OF THE WORLD

THE END OF THE WORLD

## APPENDIX

NOTE 1. Robert MacDougall, New York University. *Psychol. Rev.*, 1903.

NOTE 2. "Rhythmical forms are not in themselves rhythms; they must initiate the factor of movement in order that the impression of rhythm shall arise. . . ."—MACDOUGALL.

"La marche de l'énergie."—LANDRY.

"We have every reason to consider the movements of locomotion as the natural origin of rhythmic perception. . . ."—WUNDT.

"In the development of rhythm the motor activity of the skeletal muscles plays the most important rôle. . . ."—SWINDLE.

"My method (of teaching rhythm) is a matter of muscular experience. . . ."—DALCROZE.

"One may assume that in all cases of rhythm there is a cycle of movement sensation involved. . . ."—STETSON.

NOTE 3. I say nothing here of the difficulty of coördinating the rhythms presided over by the autonomic nervous system, with those of the intellect. No work has been done in this field, which warrants me in stating as a fact what I surmise to be the case, namely that the two are instinctively, but not always successfully coördinated—and in every case where I use the term "instinct," I refer to coördinations achieved as a result of habitual experiential adjustment to environment. Perhaps the intellectual centers have not lived in the same house with the autonomic centers long enough for this to take place with sureness in every emergency, but such coördinations must still, for the generality of men, be accomplished by directed effort.

The Greeks and the Amerinds are the only people who seem thoroughly to have understood this, though all primitive people, even as low in the scale as the Boto-Cudos,



are seen fumbling at it. The Greeks had a highly wrought system for integrating the personality by rhythmic muscular reactions, but our own systems of education not only ignore the necessity for such integration, but are for the most part presided over by men whose intellectual rhythms are developed apart from, and sometimes at the expense of, the autonomic rhythms. The Amerind, however, attains a degree of personal orchestration which enables me to treat him as Whole Man.

NOTE 4. Dalcroze, who deals with rhythm as we have to deal with it here, as a mode of expression, says unhesitatingly, "Yes, surely, rhythm is inherited." But an inheritance of this nature does not pass intact like the family jewels from parent to offspring. It passes by way of the capacity of germ plasma for subtle and continuing adaptations to the environment, in the cumulative disposition to respond to stimuli that remain constant in the environment. It appreciates from generation to generation in proportion to the release of old habits and inhibitions, as a response to streams of rhythmic impressions arising in new concepts of the environment. Probably it passes more easily in the completed circuit of the communal mind, and sparks only intermittently to conscious experiential contacts.

NOTE 5. Try rearranging some of the passages in which Dickens let himself go emotionally, such as the death of Little Nell, so that it resembles a modern free verse poem, and you will discover that that is precisely what it is. Any number of similar instances can be found in the works of Hardy and Meredith, as John Livingston Lowes has already pointed out, taken at the very crest of creative perception, fifty years in advance of our recognition of them as rhythms of poetic evocation.

NOTE 6. I shall probably not wait much longer. Before we can have any account of group-mindedness which can be built into our theories of art and society, somebody must make a long cast at the nature of mind as phenomenon. Is the human organism—any organism—a trap to catch mind-stuff, catching as high a voltage as the mechanism can hold? Or is the mind an entity taking up its residence in the organism and employing it on the business

of its own adumbration? How can we have any real understanding of group-mindedness until we measure the units of which a group-mind is made? Has the mind a skin, a surface integument which marks the point at which my mind ends and yours begins, and is the contact in states of swarm and flock and mob, one of surface tensions? Or is mob-mindedness a common state of alikeness, produced by throwing a number of distinct individual minds into the same rhythmic mode? Take the simple phenomenon of a man running mob-mindedly to a lynching, who stubs his toe and finds himself suddenly sprawling on the ground utterly deprived of his mob impulse. This might be because he had been jolted out of the mob rhythm, or because, his energization being suddenly withdrawn from his surface contacts to consider the case of his toe, those contacts instantly ceased.

Every now and then I am stopped in my thinking about art and society because nobody can tell me these things. I find it immensely important to this study of rhythm to know whether there was, in the beginning, any such thing as an individual mind as we know it now; whether, in fact, there was anything but a delicate web of consciousness, sustained from point to point of individual existence. There are times when I seem to discover in the universal primitive belief in the distribution of mana, orenda, wokonda, god-stuff, elan vital, throughout animate nature, a subconscious memory of the web, and the slight differentiation between such points of contact as a bear and a man. Did man then become the capitalist of mind-stuff? And when a Paiute or a Boto-Cudo tells you that he does not know what he thinks until he has talked with other members of the tribe, does this mean that he cannot think with the little mind which he calls his own, but must resort to the pooled cognition of the group?

Is the original web still there, so that when members of the civilized group cease to communicate with words, they have no resort but to drop back, far back into the Dawn period for contact by means of the primitive wokonda? And is this why mob action is always so far below the plane of achieved intelligence?

Somebody, I say, must make a clean guess at these



things before we can prove whether they are true, and since the function of Science is to undertake vicariously for Society the supreme abnegation of all guessing, it might as well be I as anybody who makes the first throw. Personally I don't mind admitting that I have netted nothing but the air, and in any case I can probably get away with it by calling it poetry.

NOTE 7. There is, of course, always the contingency in refuting anything that Freud has said, that any day one may be confronted with an entirely new explanation of what Freud meant when he said it. But in any case, I know nothing of the Dawn Man which can be covered with a blanket term like "libido," and I do know enough of the earlier phases of human consciousness to deny that even Neolithic man can be adequately described in the phraseology of the neurological clinic. Freud's attempt to do so in "Totemism and Taboo" is about as successful in accounting for those elements in primitive life as the Marxian doctrine of economic determinism counts for the human infant's willingness to eat anything once.

NOTE 8. See *The Flock*, and *Love-and-the-Soul-Maker* (Austin)

NOTE 9. As we use the term jazz, it implies a particular kind of musical rhythm which requires the body to respond to it by particular, and unusual, movements. Actually jazz is a group of movements which have become exteriorized in musical intervals and accents. The movements are probably the Dawn Man's muscular record of the path of certain emotional—that is to say, chemical—alterations of his primary self, the autonomic self. I have already explained that the Dawn Man was probably much more responsive to these interior adjustments than we are, as his awareness of them was more acute.

Jazz is a reversion to almost the earliest type of response of which we are capable. That would imply a certain amount of disintegration of later and higher responses, which would make an excessive, exclusive indulgence in jazz as dangerous as the moralists think it. At the same time an intelligent use of jazz might play an important part in that unharnessing of traditional inhibi-

tions of response, indispensable to the formation of a democratic society out of such diverse human materials as America has to work with.

NOTE 10. This of course would be the case if I am correct in supposing the major state of the primitive mind to be one of uncomplicated awareness. The capacity for shutting out or subordinating the rest of the stream of impressions for the purpose of concentrating on one impression, or one group of impressions, is acquired with difficulty. Our modern perception of a succession of sights or sounds as simple, means only that we have reduced it to simplicity by an act of volition, refusing to take into account any but the items concentrated upon.

Probably in the reproduction of rhythmic impression, selection is forced by the limitation of the number of rhythmic series which can be reproduced by a man's own body and its attached instruments. Further reduction may be forced by the necessity of standardizing the construction for concerted production.

NOTE 11. In this connection we recall that the Greek word for labor is from the same root as *orgy*, and that this term originally applied only to ecstatic states entered into by rhythmic movement. The same root word relation is found among many Amerind tribes, and the ritualistic refrain of many of their prayer dances is not, Lord have Mercy on us, but Work with us, work with us!

NOTE 12. I refer to the publication in my introduction to Mr. Cronyn's anthology of the poem called *The Marriage Song of Tiakens* without the note of my sources which were included in the introduction as originally written.

My first acquaintance with the marriage song was in some book of early travel in the Mississippi valley, where I found several lines of it quoted, but as at that time I had no idea that my studies would ever have any value to any one but myself, I copied the lines without making note of the source. Later when I came upon the whole song in Brinton, I accepted it as one does accept everything else that Brinton says about Amerind literature.

In making use of the Marriage Song to illustrate the likeness of Amerindian to Greek forms, I quoted Brinton



as my source, not having seen at that time his final conclusion that the Taensa papers were forgeries, conclusions not reached by him for some years after his first acceptance of them as authentic. But the original introduction knocked about the publisher's office for two years, during which a portion of it was lost, as well as a more considerable portion of my interest in it, so that when publication finally occurred I had forgotten most of the details and never found it sufficiently important to refer to again.

What I think now is that the Marriage Song was a genuine fragment which Patisot discovered probably in the very traveler's record in which I first came across it. Possibly it was this fragment which gave him the idea for the whole forgery. However, there seem so many things more important to do than reopen this ancient discussion that I have never taken the trouble to confirm my own guess in the matter. The net result of the incident has been to make me extremely careful of accepting decisions of even the most outstanding ethnologists when they touch upon literary matters.

NOTE 13. The Song of the Basket Dancers was taken down from a verbal translation offered me by a young man at the pueblo of San Ildefonso where the dance was being performed. I have no way of checking up the translation as there is no existing record of the San Ildefonso dance, and no other person could be found who was willing to vouch for it. It seems necessary to offer this explanation, since Miss Lowell has also published a song of the Basket Dancers which differs materially in content from mine. It is quite impossible that what my interpreter gave me could have been improvised, though it is possible that he may have been giving me some other than the Basket Dancer's Song. I have had that happen when the interpreter for superstitious reasons wished not to translate, and was too anxious to please to refuse me altogether. However, the Basket Dance is undoubtedly a fertility rite and this is quite certainly a fertility song. Whether the dance and the song belong together is a matter of interest only to the ethnologist.

NOTE 14. Fragments from several rain provoking ceremonies witnessed in the Rio Grande pueblos, all of them more or less derivative one from the other.

NOTE 15. This and the ensuing numbers of this group are rather saturations than reëxpressions. There is a cycle of Songs of the Season among the Luiseño of Southern California, which concludes with the magic formula of belief as I have closed this, but the rest is largely inferred.

In every other song, no matter how free the rendering, I had some specific Amerind composition as a foundation. In this last group, I have only Amerindian thought.



*[Faint handwritten text at bottom right]*

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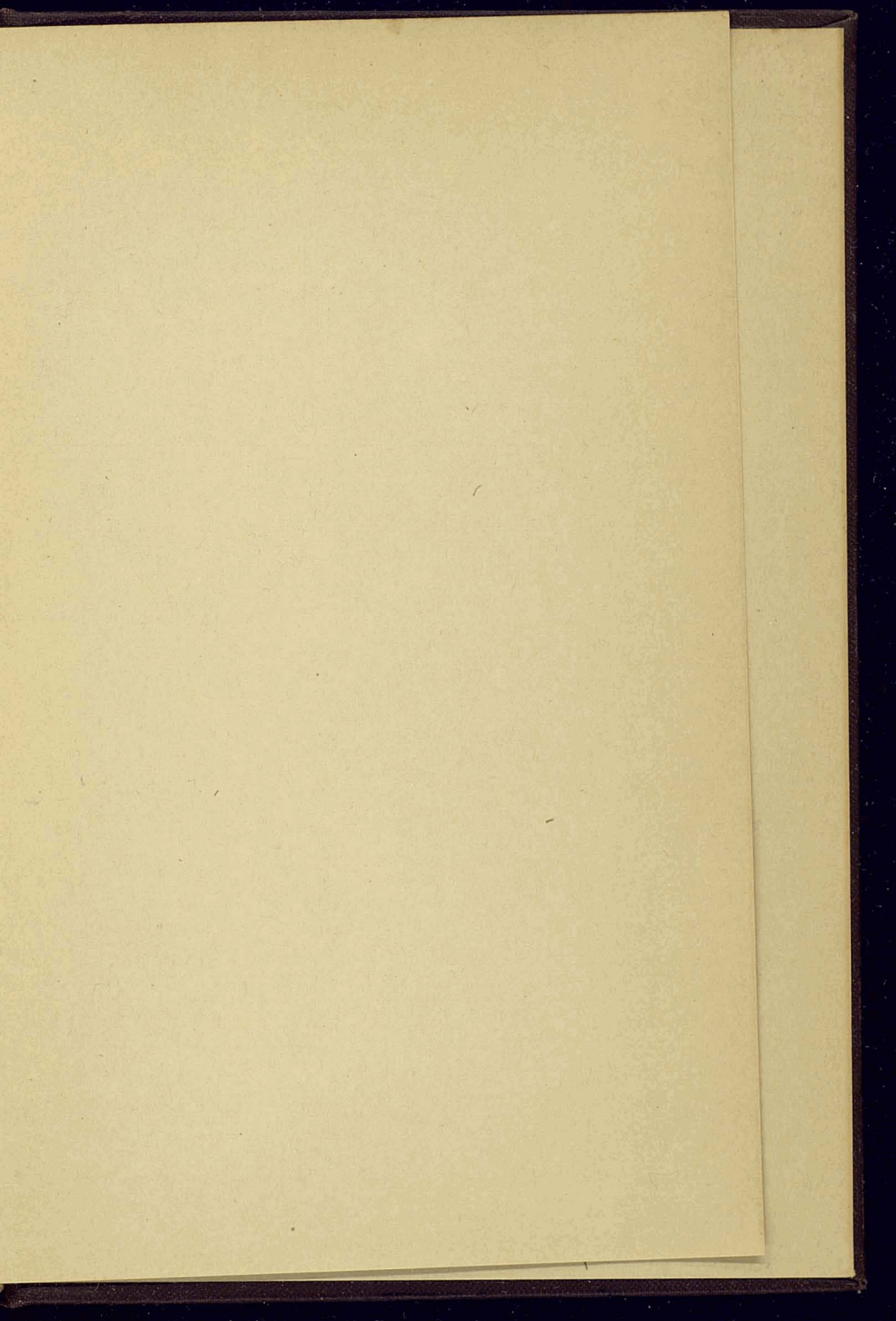
## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For permission to reprint the above poems I am indebted to the following magazines: *Harper's Weekly*, *The Bookman*, *McClure's*, *Everybody's*, *Poetry*, *The Dial*, *The Forum*, *The Double Dealer*, *Harper's*, *The Quill*. "The Much Desired" is from *Christ in Italy*; "Woman," from *Love and the Soul Maker*; "The Song of the Mateless Woman" from the original verses of *The Arrow Maker*.

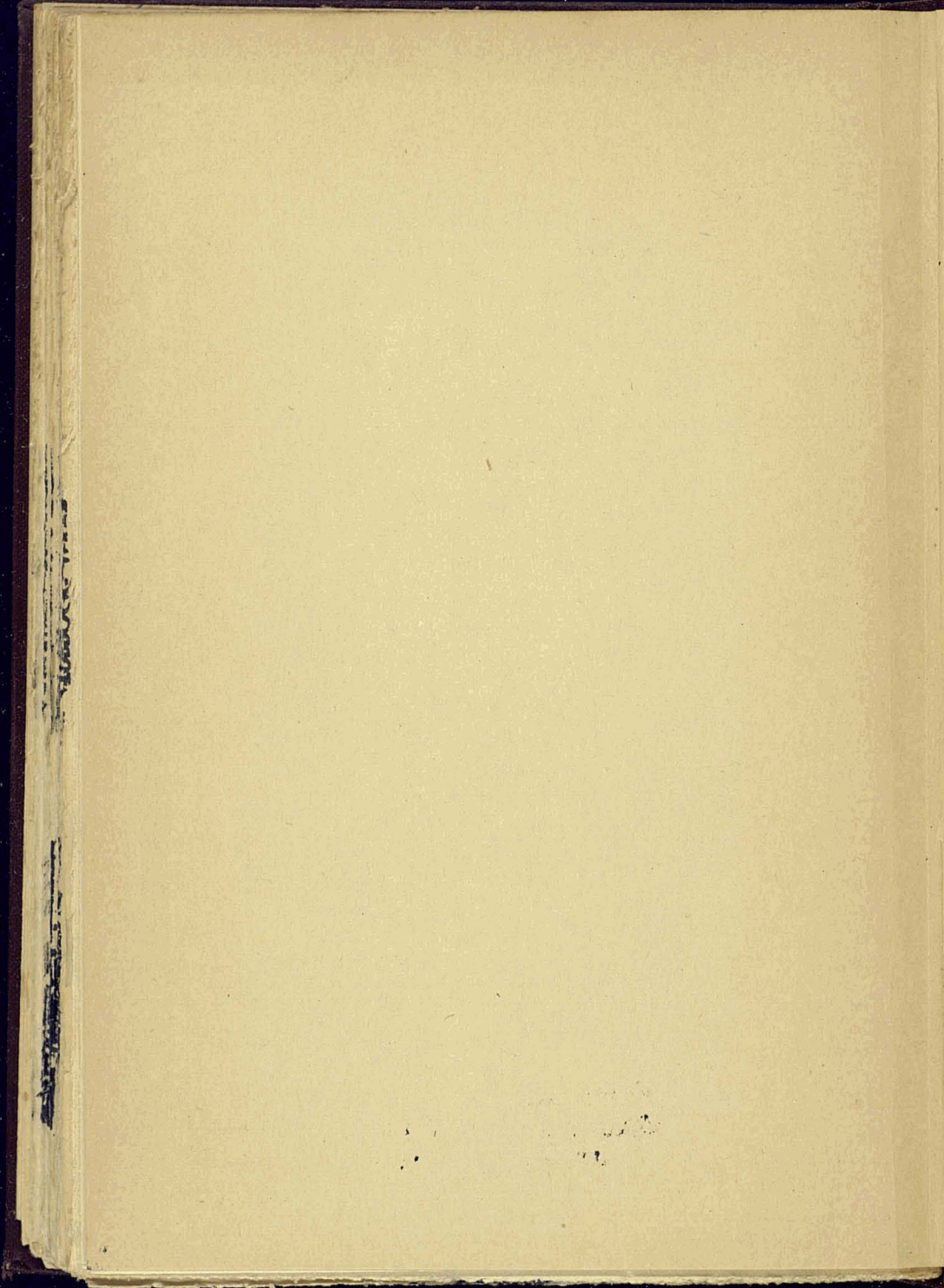


1870-1871

1872-1873







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